

de Balzac

H. DE BALZAC

COMÉDIE HUMAINE

Edited by

GEORGE SAINTSBURY


D MURRAY SMITH.

H. DE BALZAC

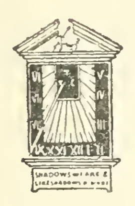
MODESTE MIGNON

Translated by

CLARA BELL

with a Preface by

GEORGE SAINTSBURY



LONDON

J. M. DENT AND CO.

NEW YORK: THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

MDCCCXCVI

Edinburgh: T. and A. Constable, Printers to Her Majesty

LIST OF ETCHINGS

Drawn and Etched by D. Murray-Smith.

PREFACE

Modeste Mignon occupies a very peculiar place in Balzac's works—a place, indeed, which, though for the form's sake more than anything else the author has connected it with the rest of the *Comédie* by some repetition of personages, is almost entirely isolated. I think it has puzzled some devoted Balzacians—so much so, that I have seen it omitted even from lists of his works suitable to 'the young person,' in which it surely should have had an eminent place. As it is distinctly late—it was written in 1844, and nothing of combined magnitude and first-class importance succeeded it except *Les Parents Pauvres*—it may not impossibly serve as a basis for the expectation that if Balzac, after his re-establishment in Paris as a wealthy personage, had received a new lease of life and vigour instead of a sentence of death, we might have had from him a series of works as different from anything that he had composed before as *Modeste Mignon* is from her sisters.

In saying this, I do not mean to put the book itself in the very first class of its author's work. It is too much of an experiment for that—of an experiment as far as the heroine is concerned, the boldness and novelty of which is likely to be under-estimated by almost any reader, unless he be a literary student who pays strict

attention to times and seasons. Even in England (though Charlotte Bronté was planning her at this very time) the wilful unconventional heroine was something of a novelty; and when it is remembered how infinitely stricter was the standard of the French *ingénue*, until quite recently, than it ever, even in the depths of the eighteenth century, was in England, the audacity of the conception of Modeste may be at least generally appreciated. And it is specially important to observe that though the author puts in Charles Mignon's mouth a vindication of the French process of tying a girl hand and foot and handing her over to the best bidder as a husband, instead of allowing her to choose for herself, Modeste's audacity in pursuing the opposite method is crowned with complete success, if not with success of exactly the kind that she anticipated. Except the case of Savinien de Portenduère and Ursule Mirouet, hers is, so far as I can remember, the only example in the whole *Comédie* of a love-marriage which, as we are told, was wholly successful, without even vacillations on the wife's part or relapses on the husband's. It is true that, with a slight touch of cowardice or concession, Balzac has made Modeste half a German; but this is a very venial bowing in the porch, not the chancel, of the House of Rimmon.

Whether the young lady is as entirely successful and as entirely charming as she is undeniably audacious in conception, is not a point for equally positive pronouncement. Just as it was probably necessary for Balzac, in order not to outrage the feelings of his readers too much, to put that Teutonic strain in Modeste, so he had, in all probability, to exhibit her as capricious, and almost unamiable, in order to attain the fitness of things in con-

nection with so terrible a young person. It is certain that even those who by no means rejoice in pattern heroines, even those who 'like them rather wicked,' may sometimes think Modeste nasty in her behaviour to her family, to Butscha, and, perhaps, to her future husband. She is, for instance, quite wrong about the whip, which she might have refused altogether, but could not with decency accept from one person and refuse from another. But what has just been said will cover this and other petulances and outbursts. So 'shoking' a young person (it is very cheerful and interesting to think how much more exactly that favourite *vox nihili* of French speech expresses French than English sentiment) could not but behave 'shokingly.'

Most of the minor characters are good: Butscha, a difficult and, in any case, slightly improbable personage, is, in his own way, very good indeed. It was probably necessary for Balzac, in turning the usual scheme of the French novel upside down, to provide a rather timid hero for such a masterful heroine; and it must be admitted that Ernest de la Brière is a rather preternaturally good young man. Still, he is not mawkish; and except that he should not have given Modeste quite such a valuable present, he behaves more like a gentleman in the full English sense than any other of Balzac's heroes.

The very full, very elaborate, and very unfavourable portrait of Canalis offers again much scope for difference of mere taste and opinion, without the possibility of laying down a conclusion very positively. Even if tradition were not unanimous on the subject, it would be quite certain that Canalis is a direct presentment of Lamartine,

from whom he is so ostentatiously dissociated. And there can, of course, be no two opinions as to the presentment being very distinctly unfavourable—much more so than the earlier introductions of this same Canalis, which are either complimentary or colourless for the most part, though his vanity is sometimes hinted at. I do not know whether Balzac had any private quarrel with the poet, or whether Lamartine's increasing leanings towards Republicanism exasperated the always monarchical novelist. But it is certain that Canalis cuts rather a bad figure here—that Lamartine was actually supposed to have married for money—and that the whole thing has more of the nature of a personal attack than anything else in Balzac, except the outbreak against Sainte-Beuve in *Un Prince de la Bohème.*

Perhaps it should be added that the practice of correspondence between incognitas and men of letters, not unknown in any country, has been rather frequent and famous in France. The chief example is, of course, that interchange of communications between Mérimée and Mlle. Jenny Dacquin, which had such important results for literature, and such not unimportant ones for the parties concerned. Balzac himself rejoiced in a Modeste called Louise, whom, however, he seems never to have seen; and there is little doubt that Lamartine the actual was attacked, as the fictitious Canalis boasts that he was, by scores of such persons. The chief instance I can think of in which such a correspondence led to matrimony was that of Southey and his second wife Caroline Bowles.

The history of *Modeste Mignon* is short and simple. It was first given to the public in the spring and summer

of 1844 by the *Journal des Débats*, and before the end of the year it appeared in four volumes, published by Roux and Cassanet. It had here seventy-five chapter divisions, with headings. In 1845, scarcely a twelvemonth after its first appearance, it took its place in the *Comédie*.

G. S.

MODESTE MIGNON

To a Polish Lady

Daughter of an enslaved land, an angel in your love, a demon in your imagination, a child in faith, an old man in experience, a man in brain, a woman in heart, a giant in hope, a mother in suffering, a poet in your dreams, and Beauty itself withal—this work, in which your love and your fancy, your faith, your experience, your suffering, your hopes, and your dreams, are like chains by which hangs a web less lovely than the poetry cherished in your soul—the poetry whose expression when it lights up your countenance is, to those who admire you, what the characters of a lost language are to the learned—this work is yours.

De Balzac.

In the beginning of October 1829, Monsieur Simon-Babylas Latournelle, a notary, was walking up the hill from le Havre to Ingouville arm in arm with his son, and accompanied by his wife. By her, like a page, came the notary's head-clerk, a little hunchback named Jean Butscha. When these four persons—of whom two at least mounted by the same way every evening—reached the turn in the zigzag road (like what the Italians call a Cornice), the notary looked about him to see whether any one might overhear him from some garden terrace

above or below, and as an additional precaution he spoke low.

'Exupère,' said he to his son, 'try to carry out in an intelligent manner, without guessing at the meaning, a little manœuvre I will explain to you; and even if you have a suspicion, I desire you will fling it into the Styx which every notary or law-student ought to keep handy for other people's secrets. After paying your respects, homage, and devoir to Madame and Mademoiselle Mignon, to Monsieur and Madame Dumay, and to Monsieur Gobenheim, if he is at the Chalet, when silence is restored, Monsieur Dumay will take you aside; look attentively—I allow you—at Mademoiselle Modeste all the time he is talking to you. My worthy friend will ask you to go out for a walk and return in about an hour, at about nine o'clock, with a hurried air; try to seem quite out of breath, then whisper in his ear, but loud enough for Mademoiselle Modeste to hear: "The young man is coming!"'

Exupère was to start for Paris on the following day to begin his law studies. It was this prospect of departure which had led Latournelle to propose to his friend Dumay that his son should play the assistant in the important conspiracy which may be suspected from his instructions.

'Is Mademoiselle Modeste suspected of carrying on an intrigue?' asked Butscha timidly of his mistress.

'Hsh—Butscha!' replied Madame Latournelle, taking her husband's arm.

Madame Latournelle, the daughter of the Registrar of the lower Court, considers herself justified by her birth in describing her family as *parliamentary*. These pretensions account for the efforts made by the lady, whose face is rather too red and rough, to assume the majesty of the tribunal whose verdicts are recorded by her father. She takes snuff, holds herself as stiff as a post, gives herself airs of importance, and looks exactly like a mummy that has been galvanised into life for a moment. She

tries to give her sharp voice an aristocratic tone, but she no more succeeds in that than in concealing her defective education. Her social value is indisputable when you look at the caps she wears, bristling with flowers, the false fronts plastered on her temples, and the gowns she chooses. How could the shops get rid of such goods if it were not for such as Madame Latournelle ?

This worthy woman's absurdities might have passed almost unremarked, for she was essentially charitable and pious, but that Nature, which sometimes has its little jest by turning out these grotesque creations, gave her the figure of a drum-major so as to display the devices of her provincial mind. She has never been out of le Havre, she believes in the infallibility of le Havre, she buys everything at le Havre, and gets her dresses there ; she speaks of herself as Norman to the finger-tips, she reverences her father, and adores her husband. Little Latournelle was bold enough to marry this woman when she had attained the post-matrimonial age of thirty-three, and they contrived to have a son. As he might anywhere have won the sixty thousand francs which the Registrar had to settle, his unusual courage was set down to a wish to avoid the irruption of the Minotaur, against which his personal attractions would hardly have guaranteed him if he had been so rash as to set his house on fire by bringing home a pretty young wife. The notary had, in fact, simply discerned the good qualities of Mademoiselle Agnès—her name was Agnès—and remarked how soon a wife's beauty is a thing of the past to her husband. As to the insignificant youth to whom the Registrar gave his Norman name at the font, Madame Latournelle was so much astonished to find herself a mother at the age of thirty-five years and seven months, that she would even now find milk to suckle him withal if he needed it—the only hyberbole which can give a notion of her maternal mania.

'How handsome my boy is!' she would say to her

little friend Modeste Mignon, without any ulterior motive, as she looked at him on their way to church, her beautiful Exupère leading the way.

'He is like you,' Modeste Mignon would reply, as she might have said, 'What bad weather!'

This sketch of the woman, a mere accessory figure, seems necessary when it is said that Madame Latournelle had for three years past been the chaperon of the young girl for whom the notary and his friend Dumay were laying one of those snares which, in the *Physiologie du Mariage*, I have called mouse-traps.

As for Latournelle, imagine a good little man, as wily as the purest honesty will allow, but whom every stranger would take for a rogue at first sight of the singular face, to which every one at le Havre is accustomed. Weak eyes, always red, compel the worthy lawyer to wear green spectacles to protect them. Each eyebrow, thinly marked with down, projects about a line beyond the brown tortoise-shell rim of the glasses, thus making a sort of double arch. If you never happen to have noticed in some passer-by the effect of these two semicircles, one above the other, and divided by a hollow, you cannot conceive how puzzling such a face may be; especially when this face is pale and haggard, and ends in a point like that of Mephistopheles, which painters have taken from the cat, and this is what Babylas Latournelle is like. Above those vile green spectacles rises a bald skull, with a wig all the more obviously artificial because it seems endowed with motion, and is so indiscreet as to show a few white hairs straggling below it all round, while it never sits straight on the forehead. As we look at this estimable Norman, dressed in black like a beetle, on two legs like pins, and know him to be the most honest soul living, we wonder, but cannot discover, what is the reason of such contradictory physiognomies.

Jean Butscha, a poor, abandoned foundling, of whom

the Registrar Labrosse and his daughter had taken charge, had risen to be head-clerk by sheer hard work, and was lodged and fed by his master, who gave him nine hundred francs a year. With no appearance of youth, and almost a dwarf, he had made Modeste his idol; he would have given his life for her. This poor creature, his eyes, like two slow matches under thickened eyelids, marked by the smallpox, crushed by a mass of woolly hair, encumbered by his huge hands, had lived under the gaze of pity from the age of seven. Is not this enough to account for him in every way? Silent, reserved, exemplary in his conduct, and religious, he wandered through the vast expanse marked on the map of the realm of Love, as Love without Hope, the barren and sublime wilderness of Longing. Modeste had nicknamed this grotesque clerk 'The Mysterious Dwarf.' This led Butscha to read Walter Scott's romance, and he said to Modeste—

'Would you like to have a rose from your Mysterious Dwarf in case of danger?'

Modeste hurled the soul of her adorer down into its mud hovel again by one of the terrible looks which young women fling at men whom they do not like. Butscha had called himself *le clerc obscure* (the obscure clerk), not knowing that the pun dated back to the origin of coats-of-arms; but he, like his master's wife, had never been away from le Havre.

It is perhaps necessary, for the benefit of those who do not know that town, to give a word of explanation as to whither the Latournelle family were bound, the head-clerk evidently being included. Ingouville is to le Havre what Montmartre is to Paris, a high hill with the town spread at its foot; with this difference, however—that the sea and the Seine surround the town and the hill; that le Havre is permanently limited by enclosing fortifications; and finally, that the mouth of the river, the port and the docks, form a scene

quite unlike that offered by the fifty thousand houses of Paris.

At the foot of Montmartre an ocean of slates displays its rigid blue waves; at Ingouville you look down on what might be moving roofs stirred by the wind. This high ground, which, from Rouen to the sea, follows the course of the river, leaving a wider or narrower margin between itself and the water, contains treasures of picturesque beauty with its towns, its ravines, its valleys, and its meadows, and rose to immense value at Ingouville after 1818, from which year dates the prosperity of le Havre. This hamlet became the Auteuil, the Ville-d'Avray, the Montmorency of the merchants, who built themselves terraced villas on this amphitheatre, to breathe the sea air sweetened by the flowers of their magnificent gardens. These bold speculators rest there from the fatigues of the counting-house, and the atmosphere of the closely packed houses, with no space between them—often not even a courtyard, the inevitable result of the growth of the population, the unyielding belt of the ramparts and the expansion of the docks.

And, indeed, how dreary is the heart of the town, how glad is Ingouville! The law of social development has made the suburb of Graville sprout into life like a mushroom; it is larger now than le Havre itself, clinging to the foot of the slope like a serpent. Ingouville, on the ridge, has but one street; and, as in all such places, the houses looking over the Seine have an immense advantage over those on the opposite side of the road, from which the view is shut out, though they stand like spectators, on tiptoe, to peep over the roofs. Here, however, as everywhere else, compromises have been exacted. Some of the houses perched on the top occupy a superior position, or enjoy a right of view which compels their neighbour to keep his buildings below a certain height. Then the broken rocky soil has cuttings here and there for roads leading up the amphitheatre, and through these

dips, some of the plots get a glimpse of the town, the river, or the sea. Though it is not precipitous, the high ground ends rather suddenly in a cliff; from the top of the street, which zigzags up the steep slope, coombes are visible where villages are planted: Saint-Adresse, two or three Saints-who-knows-who, and coves where the sea roars. This side of Ingouville, almost deserted, is in striking contrast to the handsome villas that overlook the Seine valley. Are the gales a foe to vegetation? Do the merchants shrink from the expense of gardening on so steep a slope? Be this as it may, the traveller by steamboat is startled at finding the coast so bare and rugged to the west of Ingouville—a beggar in rags next to a rich man sumptuously clothed and perfumed.

In 1829, one of the last houses towards the sea—now, no doubt, in the middle of Ingouville—was called, perhaps is still called, the Chalet. It had been originally a gatekeeper's lodge, with a plot of garden in front. The owner of the villa to which it belonged—a house with a paddock, gardens, an aviary, hothouses, and meadows—had a fancy to bring this lodge into harmony with the splendour of his residence, and had it rebuilt in the style of an English cottage. He divided it by a low wall from his lawn, graced with flowers, borders, and the terrace of the villa, and planted a hedge close to the wall to screen it. Behind this cottage, called the Chalet in spite of all he could do, lie the kitchen garden and orchards. This Chalet—a chalet without cows or dairy—has no fence from the road but a paling, of which the wood has become invisible under a luxuriant hedge.

Now, on the other side of the road, the opposite house has a similar paling and hedge. Being built under special conditions, it allows the town to be seen from the Chalet.

This little house was the despair of Monsieur Vilquin, the owner of the villa. And this is why. The creator of this residence, where every detail loudly proclaimed,

'Here millions are displayed!' had extended his grounds into the country solely, as he said, not to have his gardeners in his pocket. As soon as it was finished, the Chalet could only be inhabited by a friend.

Monsieur Mignon, the first owner, was greatly attached to his cashier, and this story will prove that Dumay fully returned the feeling; he therefore offered him this little home. Dumay, a stickler for formalities, made his master sign a lease for twelve years at three hundred francs a year; and Monsieur Mignon signed it willingly, saying, 'Consider, my dear Dumay, you are binding yourself to live with me for twelve years.'

In consequence of events to be here related, the estates of Monsieur Mignon, formerly the richest merchant in le Havre, were sold to Vilquin, one of his opponents on 'Change. In his delight at taking possession of the famous Villa Mignon, the purchaser forgot to ask for this lease to be cancelled. Dumay, not to hinder the sale, would at that time have signed anything Vilquin might have required; but when once the sale was completed, he stuck to his lease as to a revenge. He stayed in Vilquin's pocket, in the heart of the Vilquin family, watching Vilquin, annoying Vilquin, in short, Vilquin's gad-fly. Every morning, at his window, Vilquin felt a surge of violent vexation as he saw this gem of domestic architecture, this Chalet which had cost sixty thousand francs, and which blazed like a ruby in the sunshine.

An almost exact comparison! The architect had built the cottage of the finest red bricks, pointed with white. The window frames are painted bright green, and the timbers a yellow-brown. The roof projects several feet. A pretty fretwork balcony adorns the first floor, and a verandah stands out like a glass cage from the middle of the front. The ground-floor consists of a pretty drawing-room, and a dining-room divided by the bottom landing of the stairs, which are of wood designed and decorated with elegant simplicity. The

kitchen is at the back of the dining-room, and behind the drawing-room is a small room which, at this time, was used by Monsieur and Madame Dumay as their bedroom. On the first floor the architect has planned two large bedrooms, each with a dressing-room, the verandah serving as a sitting-room; and above these, in the roof, which looks like two cards leaning against each other, are two servants' rooms, each with a dormer window, attics, but fairly spacious.

Vilquin had the meanness to build a wall on the side next the kitchen garden and orchard. Since this act of vengeance, the few square yards secured to the Chalet by the lease are like a Paris garden. The outbuildings, constructed and painted to match the Chalet, back against the neighbouring grounds.

The interior of this pleasant residence harmonises with the exterior. The drawing-room, floored with polished iron-wood, is decorated with a marvellous imitation of Chinese lacquer. Myriad-coloured birds, and impossibly green foliage, in fantastic Chinese drawing, stand out against a black background, in panels with gilt frames. The dining-room is completely fitted with pine-wood carved and fretted, as in the high-class peasants' houses in Russia. The little ante-room, formed by the landing, and the staircase are painted like old oak, to represent Gothic decoration. The bedrooms, hung with chintz, are attractive by their costly simplicity. That in which the cashier and his wife slept is wainscoted, like the cabin of a steamship. These shipowners' vagaries account for Vilquin's fury. This ill-starred purchaser wanted to lodge his son-in-law and his daughter in the Cottage. This plan, being known to Dumay, may subsequently explain his Breton obstinacy.

The entrance to the Chalet is through a trellised iron gate, with lance-heads, standing some inches above the paling and the hedge. The little garden, of the same width as the pompous lawn beyond, was just now full of

flowers—roses, dahlias, and the choicest and rarest products of the hothouse flora; for another subject of grievance to Vilquin was that the pretty little hothouse, Madame's hothouse as it was called, belongs to the Chalet, and divides the Chalet from the Villa—or connects them, if you like to say so. Dumay indemnified himself for the cares of his place by caring for the conservatory, and its exotic blossoms were one of Modeste's chief pleasures. The billiard-room of Vilquin's villa, a sort of passage room, was formerly connected with this conservatory by a large turret-shaped aviary, but after the wall was built which blocked out the view of the orchard, Dumay bricked up the door.

'Wall for wall!' said he.

'You and Dumay have both gone to the wall!' Vilquin's acquaintance on 'Change threw in his teeth; and every day the envied speculator was hailed with some new jest.

In 1827 Vilquin offered Dumay six thousand francs a year and ten thousand francs in compensation if he would cancel the lease; the cashier refused, though he had but a thousand crowns laid by with Gobenheim, a former clerk of his master's. Dumay is indeed a Breton whom fate has planted out in Normandy. Imagine the hatred for his tenants worked up in Vilquin, a Norman with a fortune of three million francs. What high treason to wealth to dare prove to the rich the impotence of gold! Vilquin, whose desperation made him the talk of le Havre, had first offered Dumay the absolute freehold of another pretty house, but Dumay again refused. The town was beginning to wonder at this obstinacy, though many found a reason for it in the statement, 'Dumay is a Breton.'

In fact, the cashier thought that Madame and Mademoiselle Mignon would be too uncomfortable anywhere else. His two idols dwelt here in a temple worthy of them, and at least had the benefit of this sumptuous

cottage, where a dethroned king might have kept up the majesty of his surroundings, a kind of decorum which is often lacking to those who have fallen. The reader will not be sorry perhaps to have made acquaintance with Modeste's home and habitual companions; for, at her age, persons and things influence the future as much as character does, if indeed the character does not derive from them certain ineffaceable impressions.

By the Latournelles' manner as they went into the Chalet, a stranger might have guessed that they came there every evening.

'Already here, sir?' said the notary, on finding in the drawing-room a young banker of the town, Gobenheim, a relation of Gobenheim-Keller, the head of the great Paris house. This young fellow, who was lividly pale—one of those fair men with black eyes, in whose fixed gaze there is something fascinating—who was as sober in speech as in habits, dressed in black, strongly built, though as thin as a consumptive patient, was a constant visitor to his former master's family and the cashier's house, far less from affection than from interest; whist was played there at two sous a point, and evening dress was not insisted on; he took nothing but a few glasses of *eau sucrée*, and need offer no civilities in return. By his apparent devotion to the Mignons he got credit for a good heart; and it excused him from going into society in le Havre, from useless expenditure, and disturbing the arrangements of his domestic life. This youthful devotee of the Golden Calf went to bed every evening at half-past ten, and rose at five in the morning. Also, being certain of secrecy in Latournelle and Butscha, Gobenheim could analyse in their presence various knotty questions, benefit by the notary's gratuitous advice, and reduce the gossip on 'Change to its true value. This sucking gold-eater (Gobe-or, a witticism of Butscha's) was of the nature of the substances known to chemistry as absorbents. Ever since disaster had overwhelmed the house of Mignon,

to which he had been apprenticed by the Kellers to learn the higher branches of maritime trade, no one at the Chalet had ever asked him to do a single thing, not even a simple commission ; his answer was known beforehand. This youth looked at Modeste as he might have examined a penny lithograph.

'He is one of the pistons of the huge machine called Trade,' said poor Butscha, whose wit betrayed itself by little ironies, timidly uttered.

The four Latournelles greeted, with the utmost deference, an old lady dressed in black, who did not rise from the armchair in which she sat, for both her eyes were covered with the yellow film produced by cataract. Madame Mignon may be painted in a sentence. She attracted attention at once by the august expression of those mothers whose blameless life is a challenge to the strokes of fate, though fate has taken them as a mark for its shafts, who form the large class of Niobes. Her white wig, well curled and well put on, became her cold white face, like those of the burgomasters' wives painted by Mirevelt. The extreme neatness of her dress—velvet boots, a lace collar, a shawl put on straight—bore witness to Modeste's tender care for her mother.

When a minute's silence—as predicted by the notary—reigned in the pretty room, Modeste, seated by her mother, for whom she was embroidering a kerchief, was for a moment the centre of all eyes. This inquisitiveness, concealed under the commonplace questions always asked by callers, even those who meet every day, might have betrayed the little domestic plot against the girl, even to an indifferent person ; but Gobenheim, more than indifferent, noticed nothing ; he lighted the candles on the card-table. Dumay's attitude made the situation a terrible one for Butscha, for the Latournelles, and, above all, for Madame Dumay, who knew that her husband was capable of shooting Modeste's lover as if he were a mad dog. After dinner, the cashier had gone out for a

walk, taking with him two magnificent Pyrenean dogs, whom he suspected of treason, and had, therefore, left with a farmer, formerly a tenant of Monsieur Mignon's; then, a few minutes before the Latournelles had come in, he had brought his pistols from their place by his bed, and had laid them on the chimney-shelf, without letting Modeste see it. The young girl paid no attention to all these arrangements—strange, to say the least of it.

Though short, thick-set, and battered, with a low voice, and an air of listening to his own words, this Breton, formerly a lieutenant in the Guard, has determination and presence of mind so plainly stamped on his features, that, in twenty years, no man in the army had ever tried to make game of him. His eyes, small and calmly blue, are like two specks of steel. His manners, the expression of his face, his mode of speech, his gait, all suit his short name of Dumay. His strength, which is well known, secures him against any offence. He can kill a man with a blow of his fist; and, in fact, achieved this doughty deed at Botzen, where he found himself in the rear of his company, without any weapon, and face to face with a Saxon.

At this moment, the man's set but gentle countenance was sublimely tragical; his lips, as pale as his face, betrayed convulsive fury subdued by Breton determination; his brow was damp with slight perspiration, visible to all, and understood to be a cold moisture. The notary knew that the upshot of all this might be a scene in an assize court. In fact, the cashier was playing a game for Modeste's sake, where honour, fidelity, and feelings of far more importance than any social ties, were at stake; and it was the outcome of one of those compacts of which, in the event of fatal issues, none but God can be the judge. Most dramas lie in the ideas we form of things. The events which seem to us dramatic are only such as our soul turns to tragedy or comedy, as our own nature tends.

Madame Latournelle and Madame Dumay, charged with keeping watch over Modeste, both had an indescribable artificial manner, a quaver in their voice, which the object of their suspicions did not notice, she seemed so much absorbed by her work. Modeste laid each strand of cotton with an accuracy that might be the envy of any embroiderer. Her face showed the pleasure she derived from the satin stitch petal that put the finish to a flower. The hunchback, sitting between Madame Latournelle and Gobenheim, was swallowing tears and wondering how he could get round to Modeste, and whisper two words of warning in her ear. Madame Latournelle, by placing herself in front of Madame Mignon, had cut off Modeste, with the diabolical ingenuity of a pious prude. Madame Mignon, silent, blind, and whiter than her usual pallor, plainly betrayed her knowledge of the ordeal to which the girl was to be subjected. Now, at the last moment, perhaps she disapproved of the stratagem, though deeming it necessary. Hence her silence. She was weeping in her heart. Exupère, the trigger of the trap, knew nothing whatever of the piece in which chance had cast him for a part. Gobenheim was as indifferent as Modeste herself seemed to be—a consequence of his nature.

To a spectator in the secret, the contrast between the utter ignorance of one-half of the party, and the tremulous tension of the others, would have been thrilling. In these days, more than ever, novel-writers deal largely in such effects; and they are in their rights, for nature has at all times outdone their skill. In this case, as you will see, social nature—which is nature within nature—was allowing itself the pleasure of making fact more interesting than romance, just as torrents produce effects forbidden to painters, and achieve marvels by arranging or polishing stones so that architects and sculptors are amazed.

It was eight o'clock. At this season of the year it is

the hour of the last gleam of twilight. That evening the sky was cloudless, the mild air caressed the earth, flowers breathed their fragrance, the grinding gravel could be heard under the feet of persons returning from their walk. The sea shone like a mirror.

There was so little wind that the candles on the table burned with a steady flame though the windows were half open. The room, the evening, the house—what a setting for the portrait of this young creature, who at the moment was being studied by her friends with the deep attention of an artist gazing at *Margherita Doni*, one of the glories of the Pitti palace. Was Modeste, a flower enshrined like that of Catullus, worthy of all these precautions?—You have seen the cage: this is the bird.

At the age of twenty, slender and delicately made, like one of the Sirens invented by English painters to grace a Book of Beauty, Modeste, like her mother before her, bears the engaging expression of a grace little appreciated in France, where it is called sentimentality, though among the Germans it is the poetry of the heart suffusing the surface, and displayed in affectation by simpletons, in exquisite manners by sensible girls. Her most conspicuous feature was her pale gold hair, which classed her with the women called, no doubt in memory of Eve, *blondes celestes*, heavenly fair, whose sheeny skin looks like silk paper laid over the flesh, shivering in the winter or revelling in the sunshine of a look, and making the hand envious of the eye. Under this hair, as light as marabout feathers, and worn in ringlets, the brow, so purely formed that it might have been drawn by compasses, is reserved and calm to placidity, though bright with thought; but when or where could a smoother one be found, or more transparently frank? It seems to have a lustre like pearl. Her eyes, of greyish blue, as clear as those of a child, have all a child's mischief and innocence, in harmony

with the arch of eyebrows scarcely outlined, as lightly touched in as those painted in Chinese faces. This playful innocence is accentuated by nacreous tones, with blue veins round the eyes and on the temples, a peculiarity of those delicate complexions. Her face, of the oval so often seen in Raphael's Madonnas, is distinguished by the cool, maidenly flush of her cheeks, as tender as a China rose, on which the long lashes of her transparent eyelids cast a play of light and shade. Her throat, bent over her work, and slender to fragility, suggests the sweeping lines dear to Leonardo. A few freckles, like the patches of the past century, show that Modeste is a daughter of earth, and not one of the creations seen in dreams by the Italian School of Angelico. Lips, full but finely curved, and somewhat satirical in expression, betray a love of pleasure. Her shape, pliant without being frail, would not scare away motherhood, like that of girls who seek to triumph through the unhealthy pressure of stays. Buckram, steel, and stay-lace never improved or formed such serpentine lines of elegance, resembling those of a young poplar swayed by the wind. A pearl-grey dress, long in the waist, and trimmed with cherry-coloured gimp, accentuated the pure bust and covered the shoulders, still somewhat thin, over a deep muslin tucker, which betrayed only the outline of the curves where the bosom joins the shoulders. At the sight of this countenance, at once vague and intelligent, with a singular touch of determination given to it by a straight nose with rosy nostrils and firmly-cut outlines—a countenance where the poetry of an almost mystical brow was belied by the voluptuous curve of the mouth—where, in the changing depths of the eyes, candour seemed to fight for the mastery with the most accomplished irony—an observer might have thought that this young girl, whose quick ear caught every sound, whose nose was open to the fragrance of the blue flower of the ideal, must be the arena of a struggle

between the poetry that plays round the daily rising of the sun and the labours of the day, between fancy and reality. Modeste was both curious and modest, knowing her fate, and purely chaste, the virgin of Spain rather than of Raphael.

She raised her head on hearing Dumay say to Exupère, 'Come here, young man,' and seeing them talk together in a corner of the room, she fancied it was about some commission for Paris. She looked at the friends who surrounded her as if astonished at their silence, and exclaimed with a perfectly natural air—

'Well, are you not going to play?' pointing to the green table that Madame Latournelle called the altar.

'Let us begin,' said Dumay, after dismissing Exupère.

'Sit there, Butscha!' said Madame Latournelle, placing the table between the clerk and the group formed by Madame Mignon and her daughter.

'And you—come here,' said Dumay to his wife, desiring her to stay near him.

Madame Dumay, a little American of six-and-thirty, secretly wiped away her tears; she was devoted to Modeste, and dreaded a catastrophe.

'You are not lively this evening,' said Modeste.

'We are playing,' said Gobenheim, sorting his hand.

However interesting the situation may seem, it will be far more so when Dumay's position with regard to Modeste is explained. If the brevity of the style makes the narrative dry, this will be forgiven for the sake of hastening to the end of this scene, and of the need, which rules all dramas, for setting forth the argument.

Dumay—Anne-François-Bernard—born at Vannes, went as a soldier in 1799, joining the army of Italy. His father, a president of the Revolutionary Tribunal, had distinguished himself by so much vigour that the country was too hot to hold the son when his father, a second-rate lawyer, perished on the scaffold after the 9th

of Thermidor. His mother died of grief; and Anne, having sold everything he possessed, went off to Italy at the age of twenty-two, just as our armies were defeated. In the department of the Var he met a young man who, for similar reasons, was also in search of glory, thinking the battlefield less dangerous than Provence.

Charles Mignon, the last survivor of the family to whom Paris owes the street and the hôtel built by Cardinal Mignon, had for his father a crafty man, who wished to save his estate of la Bastie, a nice little fief under the Counts of Provence, from the clutches of the Revolution. Like all nervous people in those days, the Comte de la Bastie, now Citizen Mignon, thought it healthier to cut off other heads than to lose his own. This supposed terrorist vanished on the 9th of Thermidor, and was thenceforth placed on the list of *émigrés*. The fief of la Bastie was sold. The pepper-caster towers of the dishonoured château were razed to the ground. Finally, Citizen Mignon himself, discovered at Orange, was killed with his wife and children, with the exception of Charles Mignon, whom he had sent in search of a refuge in the department of the Hautes-Alpes. Charles, stopped by these shocking tidings, awaited quieter times in a valley of Mont Genèvre. There he lived till 1799 on a few louis his father had put into his hand at parting. At last, when he was three-and-twenty, with no fortune but his handsome person—the southern beauty which, in its perfection, is a glorious thing, the type of Antinous, Hadrian's famous favourite—he resolved to stake his Provençal daring on the red field of war, regarding his courage as a vocation, as did many another. On his way to headquarters at Nice he met the Breton.

The two infantrymen, thrown together by the similarity of their destiny and the contrast of their nature, drank of the torrent from the same cup, divided their allowance of biscuit, and were sergeants by the time peace was signed after the battle of Marengo.

When war broke out again, Charles Mignon got leave to be transferred to the cavalry, and then lost sight of his comrade. The last of the Mignons of la Bastie was, in 1812, an officer of the Legion of Honour, and Major of a cavalry regiment, hoping to be reinstated as Comte de la Bastie and made Colonel by the Emperor. Then, taken prisoner by the Russians, he was sent with many more to Siberia. His travelling companion was a poor lieutenant, in whom he recognised Anne Dumay, with no decoration, brave indeed, but hapless, like the millions of rank-and-file with worsted epaulettes, the web of men on which Napoleon painted the picture of his Empire. In Siberia, to pass the time, the lieutenant-colonel taught his comrade arithmetic and writing, for education had seemed unimportant to his Scævola parent. Charles found in his first travelling companion one of those rare hearts to whom he could pour out all his griefs while confiding all his joys.

The Provençal had, ere this, met the fate which awaits every handsome young fellow. In 1804, at Frankfort-on-the-Main, he was adored by Bettina Wallenrod, the only daughter of a banker, and married her with all the more enthusiasm because she was rich, one of the beauties of the town, and he was still only a lieutenant with no fortune but the most uncertain prospects of a soldier of that time. Old Wallenrod, a decayed German baron—bankers are always barons—was enchanted to think that the handsome lieutenant was the sole representative of the Mignons of la Bastie, and approved the affections of the fair Bettina, whom a painter—for there was a painter then at Frankfort—had taken for his model of an ideal figure of Germany. Wallenrod, who already thought of his grandsons as Comtes de la Bastie-Wallenrod, invested in the French funds a sufficient sum to secure to his daughter thirty thousand francs a year. This dower made a very small hole in his coffers, seeing how small a capital was

required. The Empire, following a practice not uncommon among debtors, rarely paid the half-yearly dividends. Charles, indeed, was somewhat alarmed at this investment, for he had not so much faith in the Imperial Eagle as the German baron had. The phenomenon of belief, or of admiration, which is only a transient form of belief, can hardly exist in illicit companionship with the idol. An engineer dreads the machine which the traveller admires, and Napoleon's officers were the stokers of his locomotive when they were not the fuel. Baron von Wallenrod-Tustall-Bartenstild then promised to help the young people. Charles loved Bettina Wallenrod as much as she loved him, and that is saying a great deal; but when a Provençal is fired, anything seems natural to him in the matter of feeling. How could he help worshipping a golden-haired woman who had stepped out of a picture by Albert Dürer, an angel of good temper, with a fortune famous in Frankfort?

So Charles had four children, of whom only two daughters were alive at the time when he poured out his sorrows on the Breton's heart. Without knowing them, Dumay was fond of these two little girls, the effect of the sympathy so well understood by Charlet, who shows us the soldier as fatherly to every child. The elder, named Bettina Caroline, was born in 1805; the second, Marie Modeste, in 1808. The unhappy lieutenant-colonel, having had no news of those he loved, came back on foot in 1814, with the lieutenant for his companion, all across Russia and Prussia. The two friends, for whom any difference of rank had ceased to exist, arrived at Frankfort just as Napoleon landed at Cannes. Charles found his wife at Frankfort, but in mourning; she had had the grief of losing the father who adored her, and who longed always to see her smiling, even by his deathbed. Old Wallenrod did not survive the overthrow of the Empire. At the age of seventy-two he had speculated largely in cotton, believ-

ing still in Napoleon's genius, and not knowing that genius is as often the slave of events as their master.

The last of the Wallenrods, the true Wallenrod-Tustall-Bartenstild, had bought almost as many bales of cotton as the Emperor had sacrificed men during his tremendous campaign in France.

'I am tying in cotton' (I am dying in clover), said this father to his daughter, for he was of the Goriot species, trying to beguile her of her grief, which terrified him, 'and I tie owing noting to noboty,'—and the Franco-German died struggling with the French language his daughter loved.

Charles Mignon, happy to have saved his wife and daughters from this double shipwreck, now returned to Paris, where the Emperor made him Lieutenant-Colonel of the Cuirassiers of the Guard, and Commander of the Legion of Honour. The Colonel at last was General and Count, after Napoleon's first success; but his dream was drowned in torrents of blood at Waterloo. He was slightly wounded, and retired to the Loire, leaving Tours before the troops were disbanded.

In the spring of 1816 Charles realised the capital of his thirty thousand francs a year, which gave him about four hundred thousand francs, and decided on going to make his fortune in America, leaving a country where persecution already pressed hardly on Napoleon's soldiers. He went from Paris to le Havre, accompanied by Dumay, whose life he had saved in one of the frequent chances of war, by taking him behind him on his horse in the confusion that ended the day of Waterloo. Dumay shared the Colonel's opinions and despondency. Charles, to whom the Breton clung like a dog, for the poor infantryman worshipped the two little girls, thought that Dumay's habits of obedience and discipline, his honesty and his attachment, would make him a servant not less faithful than useful. He therefore proposed to him to take service under him in private life. Dumay

was very happy to find himself adopted into a family with whom he hoped to live like mistletoe on an oak.

While awaiting an opportunity of sailing, choosing among the ships, and meditating on the chances offered in the various ports of their destination, the Colonel heard rumours of the splendid fortunes that the peace held in store for le Havre. While listening to a discussion between two of the natives, he saw a means of making his fortune, and set up forthwith as a shipowner, a banker, and a country gentleman. He invested two hundred thousand francs in land and houses, and freighted a ship for New York with a cargo of French silks bought at Lyons at a low figure. Dumay sailed on the vessel as his agent. While the Colonel was settling himself with his family in the handsomest house in the Rue Royale, and studying the science of banking with all the energy and prodigious acumen of a Provençal, Dumay made two fortunes, for he returned with a cargo of cotton bought for a mere song. This transaction produced an enormous capital for Mignon's business. He then purchased the villa at Ingouville, and rewarded Dumay by giving him a small house in the Rue Royale.

The worthy Breton had brought back with him from New York with his bales a pretty little wife, who had been chiefly attracted by his nationality as a Frenchman. Miss Grummer owned about four thousand dollars, twenty thousand francs, which Dumay invested in his Colonel's business. Dumay, now the *alter ego* of the shipowner, very soon learned book-keeping, the science which, to use his phrase, distinguished the sergeant-majors of trade. This guileless soldier, whom fortune had neglected for twenty years, thought himself the happiest man in the world when he saw himself master of a house—which his employer's munificence furnished very prettily—of twelve hundred francs a year of interest on his capital, and of three thousand six hundred francs

in salary. Never in his dreams had Lieutenant Dumay hoped for such prosperity; but he was even happier in feeling himself the hub of the richest merchant's house in le Havre.

Madame Dumay had the sorrow of losing all her children at their birth, and the disasters of her last confinement left her no hope of having any; she therefore attached herself to the two Mignon girls as affectionately as Dumay, who would not have loved his own children so well. Madame Dumay, the child of agriculturists, accustomed to a thrifty life, found two thousand four hundred francs enough for herself and her housekeeping. Thus, year by year, Dumay put two thousand and some hundred francs into the Mignon concern. When the master made up the annual balance, he added to the cashier's credit a bonus in proportion to the business done. In 1824 the sum to the cashier's account amounted to fifty-eight thousand francs. Then it was that Charles Mignon, Comte de la Bastie, a title that was never mentioned, crowned his cashier's joy by giving him a lease of the Chalet, where we now find Modeste and her mother.

Madame Mignon's deplorable condition had its cause in the catastrophe to which Charles's absence was due, for her husband had left her a still handsome woman. It had taken three years of sorrow to destroy the gentle German lady, but it was one of those sorrows which are like a worm lying at the heart of a fine fruit. The sum-total of her woes is easily stated: Two children who died young had stamped a double *ci-gît* on a soul which could never forget. Charles's captivity in Siberia had been to this loving heart a daily death. The disasters of the great Wallenrod house, and the unhappy banker's death on his empty money-bags, coming in the midst of Bettina's suspense about her husband, was a final blow. The joy of seeing him again almost killed this German floweret. Then came the second over-

throw of the Empire, and their plans for emigration had been like relapses of the same fit of fever.

At last ten years of constant prosperity, the amusements of her home-life, the handsomest house in le Havre, the dinners, balls, and entertainments given by the successful merchant, the magnificence of the Villa Mignon, the immense respect and high esteem enjoyed by her husband, with the undivided affection of this man, who responded to perfect love by love equally perfect,—all these had reconciled the poor woman to life.

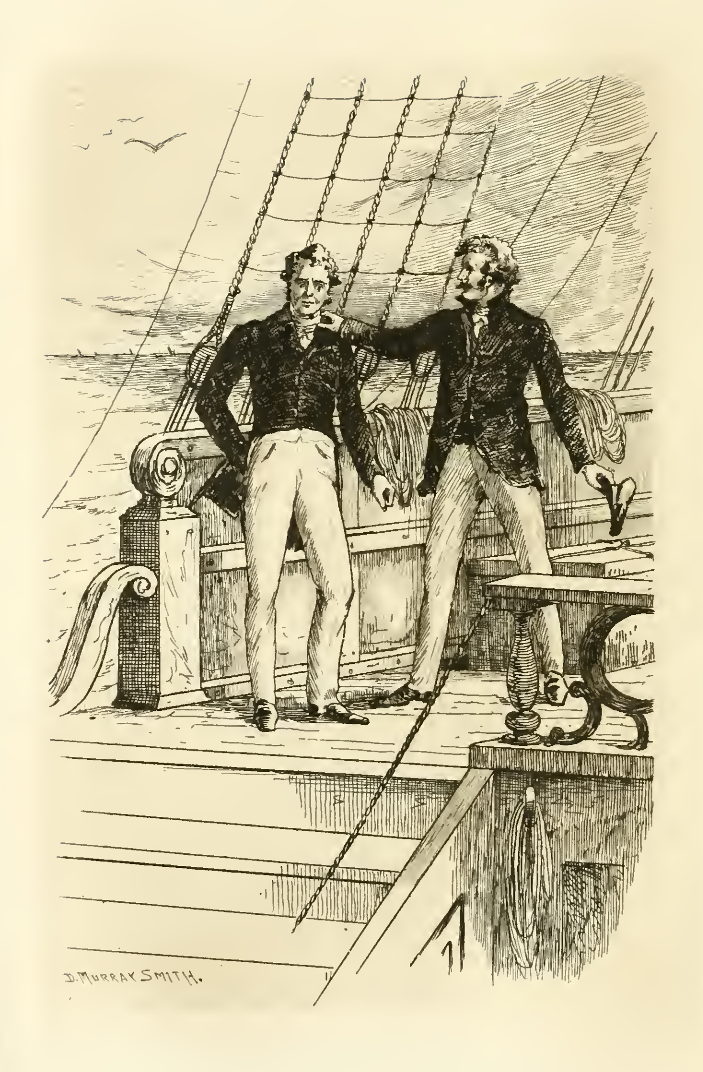
Then, at the moment when all her doubts were at rest, and she looked forward to a calm evening after her stormy day, a mysterious disaster, buried in the heart of the double household, and presently to be related, came like a summons from misfortune. In 1826, in the midst of a party, when all the town was ready to return Charles Mignon as its deputy, three letters, from New York, London, and Paris, came like three hammer-strokes on the glass house of Prosperity. In ten minutes ruin swooped down with vulture's wings on this unheard-of good fortune, like the frost on the Grande Armée in 1812. In one night which he spent with Dumay over the books, Charles Mignon was prepared for the worst. Everything he possessed, not excepting the furniture, would avail to pay everybody.

'Le Havre,' said the Colonel to the Lieutenant, 'shall never see me in the mud. Dumay, I will take your sixty thousand francs at six per cent——'

'At three, Colonel.'

'At nothing, then,' said Charles peremptorily. 'I make you my partner in my new enterprise. The *Modeste*, which is no longer mine, sails to-morrow; the captain takes me with him. You—I place you in charge of my wife and daughter. I shall never write. No news is good news.'

Dumay, still but a lieutenant, had not asked his Colonel by a word what his purpose was.


D. MURRAY SMITH.

'I suspect,' said he to Latournelle with a knowing air, 'that the Colonel has laid his plans.'

On the following morning, at break of day, he saw his master safe on board the good ship *Modeste*, bound for Constantinople. Standing on the vessel's poop, the Breton said to the Provençal—

'What are your last orders, Colonel?'

'That no man ever goes near the Chalet!' cried the father, with difficulty restraining a tear. 'Dumay, guard my last child as a bull-dog might. Death to any one who may try to tempt my second daughter! Fear nothing, not even the scaffold. I would meet you there!'

'Colonel, do your business in peace. I understand. You will find Mademoiselle Modeste as you leave her, or I shall be dead! You know me, and you know our two Pyrenean dogs. No one shall get at your daughter. Forgive me for using so many words.'

The two soldiers embraced as men who had learnt to appreciate each other in the heart of Siberia.

The same day the *Courrier du Havre* published this terrible, simple, vigorous, and honest leading paragraph:—

'The house of Charles Mignon has suspended payment, but the undersigned liquidators pledge themselves to pay all the outstanding debts. Bearers of bills at date can at once discount them. The value of the landed estate will completely cover current accounts.

'This notice is issued for the honour of the house, and to prevent any shock to general credit on the Havre Exchange.

'Monsieur Charles Mignon sailed this morning in the *Modeste* for Asia Minor, having left a power of attorney to enable us to realise every form of property, even landed estate.

'DUMAY, liquidator for the banking account.
'LATOURNELLE, notary, liquidator for the houses and land in town and country.
'GOBENHEIM, liquidator for commercial bills.'

Latournelle owed his prosperity to Monsieur Mignon's kindness; he had, in 1817, lent the notary a hundred thousand francs to buy the best business in le Havre. The poor lawyer, without any pecuniary resources, was by that time forty years old; he had been a head-clerk for ten years, and looked forward to being a clerk for the rest of his days. He was the only man in le Havre whose devotion could compare with Dumay's, for Gobenheim took advantage of this bankruptcy to carry on Mignon's connection and business, which enabled him to start his little banking concern. While universal regret was expressed on 'Change, on the Quays, and in every home; while praises of a blameless, honourable, and beneficent man were on every lip, Latournelle and Dumay, as silent and as busy as emmets, were selling, realising, paying, and settling up. Vilquin gave himself airs of generosity, and bought the villa, the town-house, and a farm, and Latournelle took advantage of this first impulse to extract a good price from Vilquin.

Every one wanted to call on Madame and Mademoiselle Mignon, but they had obeyed Charles and taken refuge at the Chalet the very morning of his departure, of which at the first moment they knew nothing. Not to be shaken in his purpose by their grief, the courageous banker had kissed his wife and daughter in their sleep. Three hundred cards were left at the door. A fortnight later the most complete oblivion, as Charles had prophesied, showed the two women the wisdom and dignity of the step enjoined on them.

Dumay appointed representatives of his master at New York, London, and Paris. He followed up the liquidation of the three banking houses to which Mignon's ruin was due, and between 1826 and 1828 recovered five hundred thousand francs, the eighth part of Charles's fortune. In obedience to the orders drawn up the night before his departure, Dumay forwarded this sum at the beginning of 1828, through the house of Mongenod at

New York, to be placed to Monsieur Mignon's credit. All this was done with military punctuality, excepting with regard to the retention of thirty thousand francs for the personal needs of Madame and Mademoiselle Mignon. This, which Charles had ordered, Dumay did not carry out. The Breton sold his house in the town for twenty thousand francs, and gave this to Madame Mignon, reflecting that the more money his Colonel could command, the sooner he would return.

'For lack of thirty thousand francs a man sometimes is lost,' said he to Latournelle, who bought the house at his friend's price; and there the inhabitants of the Chalet could always find rooms.

This, to the famous house of Mignon, le Havre, was the outcome of the crisis which, in 1825-26, upset the principal centres of commerce, and caused—if you remember that hurricane—the ruin of several Paris bankers, one of them the President of the Chamber of Commerce. It is intelligible that this tremendous overthrow, closing a civic reign of ten years, might have been a deathblow to Bettina Wallenrod, who once more found herself parted from her husband, knowing nothing of his fate, apparently as full of peril and adventure as Siberian exile; but the trouble that was really bringing her to the grave was to these visible griefs what an ill-starred child is to the commonplace troubles of a family—a child that gnaws and devours its home. The fatal stone that had struck this mother's heart was a tombstone in the little cemetery of Ingouville, on which may be read:—

BETTINA CAROLINE MIGNON

AGED TWO-AND-TWENTY

PRAY FOR HER!

1827.

This inscription is for the girl who lies there what many an epitaph is for the dead—a table of contents to

an unknown book. Here is the book in its terrible epitome, and it may explain the pledge demanded and given in the parting words of the colonel and subaltern.

A young man, extremely handsome, named Georges d'Estourny, came to le Havre on the common pretext of seeing the sea, and he saw Caroline Mignon. A man of some pretence to fashion, and from Paris, never lacks some introductions; he was therefore invited by the intervention of a friend of the Mignons to an entertainment at Ingouville. He fell very much in love with Caroline and her fortune, and schemed for a happy issue. At the end of three months he had played every trick of the seducer, and run away with Caroline. The father of a family who has two daughters ought no more to admit a young man to his house without knowing him than he should allow books or newspapers to lie about without having read them. The innocence of a girl is like milk which is turned by a thunder-clap, by an evil smell, by a hot day, or even by a breath.

When he read his eldest daughter's farewell letter, Charles Mignon made Madame Dumay set out instantly for Paris. The family alleged the need for a change of air suddenly prescribed by the family doctor, who lent himself to this necessary pretext; but this could not keep the town from gossiping about her absence.

'What, such a strong girl, with the complexion of a Spaniard, and hair like jet!—She, consumptive!'

'Yes—so they say. She did something imprudent——'

'Ah, ha!' cried some Vilquin.

'She came in from a ride bathed in perspiration and drank iced water, at least so Dr. Troussenard says.'

By the time Madame Dumay returned, the troubles of the Mignons were an exhausted subject; no one thought anything more of Caroline's absence or the reappearance of the cashier's wife.

At the beginning of 1827 the newspapers were full of

the trial of Georges d'Estourny, who was proved guilty of constant cheating at play. This young pirate vanished abroad without thinking any more about Mademoiselle Mignon, whose money value was destroyed by the bankruptcy at le Havre. Before long Caroline knew that she was deserted, and her father a ruined man. She came home in a fearful state of mortal illness, and died a few days afterwards at the Chalet. Her death, at any rate, saved her reputation. The malady spoken of by Monsieur Mignon at the time of his daughter's elopement was very generally believed in, and the medical orders which had sent her off, it was said, to Nice.

To the very last the mother hoped to save her child. Bettina was her darling, as Modeste was her father's. There was something touching in this preference: Bettina was the image of Charles, as Modeste was of her mother. They perpetuated their love in their children. Caroline, a Provençal, inherited from her father the beautiful blue-black hair, like a raven's wing, which we admire in the daughters of the south, the hazel, almond-shaped eye as bright as a star, the olive complexion with the golden glow of a velvety fruit, the arched foot, the Spanish bust that swells beneath the bodice. And the father and mother were alike proud of the charming contrast of the two sisters.

'A demon and an angel!' people used to say, without ill meaning, though it was prophetic.

After spending a month in tears in her room, where she insisted on staying and seeing no one, the poor German lady came forth with her eyes seriously injured. Before she lost her sight she went, in spite of all her friends, to look at Caroline's tomb. This last image remained bright in her darkness, as the red spectre of the last object we have seen remains when we shut our eyes in bright daylight. After this terrible and twofold disaster, Dumay, though he could not be more devoted,

was more anxious than ever about Modeste, now an only child, though her father knew it not. Madame Dumay, who was crazy about Modeste, like all women who have no children, overpowered her with her deputy motherhood, but without disobeying her husband's orders. Dumay was distrustful of female friendships. His injunctions were absolute.

'If ever any man, of whatever age or rank, speaks to Modeste,' said Dumay, 'if he looks at her, casts sheep's eyes at her, he is a dead man. I will blow his brains out and surrender myself to the Public Prosecutor. My death may save her. If you do not wish to see me cut my throat, fill my place unfailingly when I am in town.'

For three years Dumay had examined his pistols every night. He seemed to have included in his oath the two Pyrenean dogs, remarkably intelligent beasts; one slept in the house, the other was sentinel in a kennel that he never came out of, and he never barked; but the minute when those dogs should set their teeth in an intruder would be a terrible one for him.

The life may now be imagined which the mother and daughter led at the Chalet. Monsieur and Madame Latournelle, frequently accompanied by Gobenheim, came almost every evening to visit their friends and play a rubber. Conversation would turn on business at le Havre, on the trivial events of country town life. They left between nine and ten. Modeste went to put her mother to bed; they said their prayers together, they talked over their hopes, they spoke of the dearly loved traveller. After kissing her mother, Modeste went to her own room at about ten o'clock. Next morning Modeste dressed her mother with the same care, the same prayers, the same little chat. To Modeste's honour, from the day when her mother's terrible infirmity deprived her of one of her senses, she made herself her waiting-maid, and always with the same solicitude at every hour, without wearying of it, or finding it mono-

tonous. Her affection was supreme, and always ready, with a sweetness rare in young girls, and that was highly appreciated by those who saw her tenderness. And so, Modeste was, in the eyes of the Latournelles and of Monsieur and Madame Dumay, the jewel I have described. Between breakfast and dinner, on sunny days, Madame Mignon and Madame Dumay took a little walk as far as the shore, Modeste assisting, for the blind woman needed the support of two arms.

A month before the scene in which this digression falls as a parenthesis, Madame Mignon had held council with her only friends, Madame Latournelle, the notary, and Dumay, while Madame Dumay was giving Modeste the little diversion of a long walk.

'Listen, my friends,' said the blind woman, 'my daughter is in love. I feel it; I see it. A strange change has come over her, and I cannot think how you have failed to observe it . . .'

'Bless my stars!' the Lieutenant exclaimed.

'Do not interrupt me, Dumay. For the last two months Modeste has dressed herself with care as if she were going to meet some one. She has become excessively particular about her shoes; she wants her foot to look nice, and scolds Madame Gobain the shoemaker. Some days the poor child sits gloomy and watchful, as if she expected somebody; her voice is short and sharp, as though by questioning her I broke in on her expectancy, her secret hopes; and then, if that somebody has been——'

'Bless my stars!'

'Sit down, Dumay,' said the lady. 'Well, then Modeste is gay. Oh! you do not see that she is gay; you cannot discern these shades, too subtle for eyes to see that have all nature to look at. Her cheerfulness betrays itself in the tones of her voice, accents which I can detect and account for. Modeste, instead of sitting

still and dreaming, expends her light activity in flighty movement. In short, she is happy! There is a tone of thanksgiving even in the ideas she utters. Oh, my friends, I have learnt to know happiness as well as grief. By the kiss my poor Modeste gives me I can guess what is going on in her mind: whether she has had what she was expecting, or is uneasy. There are many shades in kisses, even in those of a young girl—for Modeste is innocence itself, but it is not ignorant innocence. Though I am blind, my affection is clairvoyante, and I implore you—watch my daughter.'

On this, Dumay, quite ferocious, the notary as a man who is bent on solving a riddle, Madame Latournelle as a duenna who has been cheated, and Madame Dumay, who shared her husband's fears,—all constituted themselves spies over Modeste. Modeste was never alone for a moment. Dumay spent whole nights under the windows, wrapped in a cloak like a jealous Spaniard; still, armed as he was with military sagacity, he could find no accusing clue. Unless she were in love with the nightingales in Vilquin's Park, or some goblin prince, Modeste could have seen no one, could neither have received nor given a signal. Madame Dumay, who never went to bed till she had seen Modeste asleep, hovered about the roads on the high ground near the Chalet with a vigilance equal to her husband's. Under the eyes of these four Argus, the blameless child, whose smallest actions were reported and analysed, was so absolutely acquitted of any criminal proceedings, that the friends suspected Madame Mignon of a craze, a monomania. It devolved on Madame Latournelle, who herself took Modeste to church and home again, to tell the mother that she was under a mistake.

'Modeste,' said she, 'is a very enthusiastic young person; she has passions for this one's poetry and that one's prose. You could not see what an impression was made on her by that executioner's piece (a phrase of

Butscha's, who lent wit without any return to his benefactress), called *le Dernier Jour d'un condamné;* but she seemed to me beside herself with her admiration of that Monsieur Hugo. I cannot think where that sort of people (Victor Hugo, Lamartine, and Byron were what Madame Latournelle meant by *that sort*) go to find their ideas. The little thing talked to me about *Childe Harold;* I did not choose to have the worst of it; I was fool enough to set to work to read it that I might be able to argue with her. I don't know whether it is to be set down to the translation, but my heart heaved, my eyes were dizzy. I could not get on with it. It is full of howling comparisons, of rocks that faint away, of the lavas of war!

'Of course, as it is an Englishman on his travels, one must expect something queer, but this is really too much! You fancy you are in Spain, and he carries you up into the clouds above the Alps; he makes the torrents and the stars speak; and then there are too many virgins! You get sick of them. In short, after Napoleon's campaigns we have had enough of flaming shot and sounding brass which roll on from page to page. Modeste tells me that all this pathos comes from the translator, and I ought to read the English. But I am not going to learn English for Lord Byron when I would not learn it for Exupère! I much prefer the romances of Ducray-Duménil to these English romances! I am too thoroughly Norman to fall in love with everything that comes from abroad, and especially from England——'

Madame Mignon, notwithstanding her perpetual mourning, could not help smiling at the idea of Madame Latournelle reading *Childe Harold.* The stern lady accepted this smile as approbation of her doctrines.

'And so, my dear Madame Mignon, you mistake Modeste's imaginings, the result of her reading, for love affairs. She is twenty. At that age a girl loves herself.

She dresses to see herself dressed. Why, I used to make my little sister, who is dead now, put on a man's hat, and we played at gentleman and lady. . . . You, at Frankfort, had a happy girlhood, but let us be just: Modeste here has no amusements. In spite of our readiness to meet her lightest wishes, she knows that she is guarded, and the life she leads has little pleasure to offer a girl who could not, as she can, find something to divert her in books. Take my word for it, she loves no one but you. Think yourself lucky that she falls in love with nobody but Lord Byron's corsairs, Walter Scott's romantic heroes, or your Germans, Count Egmont, Werther, Schiller, and all the other *ers*.'

'Well, Madame?' said Dumay respectfully, alarmed by Madame Mignon's silence.

'Modeste is not merely ready for love; she loves somebody,' said the mother obstinately.

'Madame, my life is at stake, and you will no doubt allow me—not for my own sake, but for my poor wife's and for the Colonel's, and all our sakes—to try to find out which is mistaken—the watch-dog or the mother.'

'It is you, Dumay! Oh, if I could but look my daughter in the face!' said the poor blind woman.

'But who is there that she can love?' replied Madame Latournelle. 'As for us—I can answer for my Exupère.'

'It cannot be Gobenheim, whom we hardly see for nine hours out of the week since the Colonel went away. Besides, he is not thinking of Modeste—that crown-piece made man! His uncle, Gobenheim-Keller, told him, "Get rich enough to marry a Keller!" With that for a programme, there is no fear that he will even know of what sex Modeste is. Those are all the men we see here. I do not count Butscha, poor little hunchback. I love him; he is your Dumay, Madame,' he said to the notary's wife. 'Butscha knows very well that if he glanced at Modeste it would cost him a combing *à la mode de Vannes*.—Not a soul ever comes

near us. Madame Latournelle, who since—since your misfortune, comes to take Modeste to church and bring her home again, has watched her carefully these last days during the Mass, and has seen nothing suspicious about her. And then, if I must tell you everything, I myself have raked the paths round the house for the last month, and I have always found them in the morning with no footmarks.'

'Rakes are not costly nor difficult to use,' said the German lady.

'And the dogs?' asked Dumay.

'Lovers can find sops for them,' replied Madame Mignon.

'I could blow out my own brains if you are right, for I should be done for,' cried Dumay.

'And why, Dumay?'

'Madame, I could not meet the Colonel's eye if he were not to find his daughter, especially now that she is his only child; and as pure, as virtuous as she was when he said to me on board the ship, "Do not let the fear of the scaffold stop you, Dumay, when Modeste's honour is at stake."'

'I know you both—how like you!' said Madame Mignon, much moved.

'I will wager my eternal salvation that Modeste is as innocent as she was in her cradle,' said Madame Dumay.

'Oh, I will know all about it,' replied Dumay, 'if Madame la Comtesse will allow me to try a plan, for old soldiers are knowing in stratagems.'

'I allow you to do anything that may clear up the matter without injuring our last surviving child.'

'And what will you do, Anne,' said his wife, 'to find out a young girl's secret when it is so closely kept?'

'All of you obey me exactly,' said the Lieutenant, 'for you must all help.'

This brief account, which, if elaborately worked up,

would have furnished forth a complete picture of domestic life—how many families will recognise in it the events of their own home!—is enough to give a clue to the importance of the little details previously given of the persons and circumstances of this evening, when the lieutenant had undertaken to cope with a young girl, and to drag from the recesses of her heart a passion detected by her blind mother.

An hour went by in ominous calm, broken only by the hieroglyphical phrases of the whist-players: 'Spade!—Trump!—Cut!—Have we the honours?—Two trebles!—Eight all!—Who deals?'—phrases representing in these days the great emotions of the aristocracy of Europe. Modeste stitched, without any surprise at her mother's taciturnity. Madame Mignon's pocket-handkerchief slipped off her lap on to the floor; Butscha flew to pick it up. He was close to Modeste, and as he rose said in her ear, 'Be on your guard!'

Modeste raised astonished eyes, and their light, pointed darts as it seemed, filled the hunchback with ineffable joy.

'She loves no one,' said the poor fellow to himself, and he rubbed his hands hard enough to flay them.

At this moment Exupère flew through the garden and into the house, rushing into the drawing-room like a whirlwind, and said in Dumay's ear, 'Here is the young man!'

Dumay rose, seized his pistols, and went out.

'Good God! Supposing he kills him!' cried Madame Dumay, who burst into tears.

'But what is going on?' asked Modeste, looking at her friends with an air of perfect candour, and without any alarm.

'Something about a young man who prowls round the Chalet!' cried Madame Latournelle.

'What then?' said Modeste. 'Why should Dumay kill him?'

'*Sancta simplicitas!*' said Butscha, looking at his master as proudly as Alexander gazes at Babylon in Lebrun's picture.

'Where are you going, Modeste?' asked her mother, as her daughter was leaving the room.

'To get everything ready for you to go to bed, mamma,' replied Modeste, in a voice as clear as the notes of a harmonica.

'You have had all your trouble for nothing,' said Butscha to Dumay when he came in.

'Modeste is as saintly as the Virgin on our altar!' cried Madame Latournelle.

'Ah, Good Heavens! Such agitation is too much for me,' said the cashier. 'And yet I am a strong man.'

'I would give twenty-five sous to understand one word of what you are at this evening,' said Gobenheim; 'you all seem to me to have gone mad.'

'And yet a treasure is at stake,' said Butscha, standing on tiptoe to speak into Gobenheim's ear.

'Unfortunately, I am almost positive of the truth of what I say,' repeated the mother.

'Then it now lies with you, Madame,' said Dumay quietly, 'to prove that we are wrong.'

When he found that nothing was involved but Modeste's reputation, Gobenheim took his hat, bowed, and went away, carrying off ten sous, and regarding a fresh rubber as hopeless.

'Exupère, and you Butscha, leave us,' said Madame Latournelle. Go down to the town. You will be in time to see one piece; I will treat you to the play.'

As soon as Madame Mignon was left with her four friends, Madame Latournelle glanced at Dumay, who, being a Breton, understood the mother's persistency, and then at her husband fidgeting with the cards, and thought herself justified in speaking.

'Come, Madame Mignon, tell us what decisive evidence has struck your ear?'

'Oh, my dear friend, if you were a musician, you, like me, would have heard Modeste's tone when she sings of love.'

The piano belonging to the two sisters was one of the few feminine luxuries among the furniture brought from the town-house to the Chalet. Modeste had mitigated some tedium by studying without a master. She was a born musician, and played to cheer her mother. She sang with natural grace the German airs her mother taught her. From this instruction and this endeavour had resulted the phenomenon, not uncommon in natures prompted by a vocation, that Modeste unconsciously composed purely melodic strains, as such composition is possible without a knowledge of harmony. Melody is to music what imagery and feeling are to poetry, a flower that may blossom spontaneously. All nations have had popular melodies before the introduction of harmony. Botany came after flowers. Thus Modeste, without having learnt anything of the technique of painting beyond what she had gathered from seeing her sister work in water-colours, could stand enchanted before a picture by Raphael, Titian, Rubens, Murillo, Rembrandt, Albert Dürer, or Holbein, that is to say, the highest ideal of each nation. Now, for about a month, Modeste had more especially burst into nightingale songs, into new strains so poetical as to arouse her mother's attention, surprised as she was to find Modeste bent on composition and trying airs to unfamiliar words.

'If your suspicions have no other foundation,' said Latournelle to Madame Mignon, 'I pity your sensitiveness.'

'When a young girl sings in Brittany,' said Dumay, now grave again, 'the lover is very near.'

'I will let you overhear Modeste improvising,' said the mother, 'and you will see!——'

'Poor child!' said Madame Dumay. 'If she could but know of our anxiety, she would be in despair; and

she would tell us the truth, especially if she knew all it meant to Dumay.'

'To-morrow, my friends, I will question Modeste,' said Madame Mignon; 'and perhaps I shall achieve more by affection than you have gained by ruse.'

Was the comedy of the 'Ill-guarded Daughter' being enacted here, as it is everywhere and at all times, while these worthy Bartolos, these spies, these vigilant watch-dogs failed to scent, to guess, to detect the lover, the conspiracy, the smoke of the fire?

This was not the consequence of any defiance between a prisoner and her gaolers, between the tyranny of the dungeon and the liberty of the captive, but merely the eternal repetition of the first drama played as the curtain rose on the new Creation: Eve in Paradise. Which, in this case, was right—the mother or the watch-dog?

None of the persons about Modeste understood the girl's heart—for, be assured, the soul and the face were in unison. Modeste had transplanted her life into a world of which the existence is as completely denied in our days as the New World of Christopher Columbus was denied in the sixteenth century. Fortunately, she could be silent, or she would have been thought mad.

We must first explain the influence that past events had had on the girl. Two especially had formed her character, as they had awakened her intelligence. Monsieur and Madame Mignon, startled by the disaster that had come upon Bettina, had, before their bankruptcy, resolved on seeing Modeste married, and their choice fell on the son of a wealthy banker, a native of Hamburg, who had settled at le Havre in 1815, and who was under some obligations to them. This young man—Francisque Althor—the dandy of le Havre, handsome in the style which captivates the philistine, what the English call a heavy-weight—florid healthy colouring, firm flesh, and square shoulders—threw over his bride elect, at the news of their disaster, so completely that he had never since

set eyes on Modeste, or on Madame Mignon, or on the Dumays. Latournelle having made so bold as to speak to the father, Jacob Althor, on the subject, the old German had shrugged his shoulders, and replied, 'I do not know what you mean.'

This reply, repeated to Modeste to give her experience, was a lesson she understood all the better because Latournelle and Dumay made voluminous comments on this base desertion. Charles Mignon's two daughters, spoiled children as they were, rode, had their own horses and servants, and enjoyed fatal liberty. Modeste, finding herself in command of a recognised lover, had allowed Francisque to kiss her hand, and put his arm round her to help her to mount; she had accepted flowers, and the trifling gifts of affection which are the burden of paying court to a young lady; she worked him a purse, believing in bonds of that kind, so strong to noble souls, but mere cobwebs to the Gobenheims, Vilquins, and Althors.

In the course of the spring, after Madame Mignon and her daughter had moved into the Chalet, Francisque Althor went to dine with the Vilquins. On catching sight of Modeste beyond the wall of the lawn, he looked away. Six weeks after, he married Mademoiselle Vilquin—the eldest. Thus Modeste learnt that she, handsome, young, and well born, had for three months been simply Mademoiselle Million. So Modeste's poverty, which was of course known, was a sentinel which guarded the ways to the Chalet quite as well as the Dumays' prudence and the Latournelles' vigilance. Mademoiselle Mignon was never mentioned but with insulting pity: 'Poor girl! what will become of her? She will die an old maid.'—'What a hard lot! After seeing all the world at her feet, and having a chance of marrying Althor, to find that no one will have anything to say to her?'—'Such a life of luxury, my dear! and to have sunk to penury!'

Nor were these insults spoken in private and only

guessed by Modeste; more than once she heard them uttered by the young men and girls of the town when walking at Ingouville, who, knowing that Madame and Mademoiselle Mignon lived at the Chalet, discussed them audibly as they went past the pretty little house. Some of the Vilquins' friends wondered that these ladies could bear to live so near the home of their former splendour. Modeste, sitting behind closed shutters, often heard such impertinence as this: 'I cannot think how they can live there!' one would say to another, walking round the garden, perhaps to help the Vilquins to be rid of their tenants. 'What do they live on?—What can they do there?—The old woman is gone blind!—Is Mademoiselle Mignon still pretty?—Ah, she has no horses now. How dashing she used to be!'

As she heard this savage nonsense spoken by envy, foul-mouthed and surly, and tilting at the past, many girls would have felt the blood rise to their very brow; others would have wept, some would have felt a surge of rage; but Modeste smiled as we smile at a theatre, hearing actors speak. Her pride could not descend to the level which such words, rising from below, could reach.

The other event was even more serious than this mercenary desertion. Bettina-Caroline had died in her sister's arms; Modeste had nursed her with the devotion of a woman, with the inquisitiveness of a maiden imagination. The two girls, in the watches of the night, had exchanged many a confidence. What dramatic interest hung round Bettina in the eyes of her innocent sister! Bettina knew passion only as misfortune; she was dying because she had loved. Between two girls every man, wretch though he be, is a lover. Passion is the one thing really absolute in human life; it will always have its own. Georges d'Estourny, a gambler, dissipated and guilty, always dwelt in the memory of these two young things as the Parisian dandy of the Havre parties, the

cynosure of every woman—Bettina believed that she had snatched him from Madame Vilquin's flirtations—and, to crown all, Bettina's successful lover. In a young girl her worship is stronger than social reprobation. In Bettina's mind, justice had erred; how should she have condemned a young man by whom she had been loved for six months, loved with passion in the mysterious retreat where Georges hid her in Paris, that he might preserve his liberty. Thus, Bettina, in her death, had inoculated her sister with love.

The sisters had often discussed the great drama of passion, to which imagination lends added importance; and the dead girl had taken Modeste's purity with her to her grave, leaving her not perhaps all-knowing, but, at any rate, all-curious. At the same time, remorse had often set sharp pangs in Bettina's heart, and she lavished warnings on her sister. In the midst of her revelations, she never failed to preach obedience in Modeste, absolute obedience to her family. On the eve of her death, she implored her sister to remember the pillow she had soaked with her tears, and never to imitate the conduct her sufferings could scarcely expiate. Bettina accused herself of having brought the lightning down on those dear to her; she died in despair at not receiving her father's forgiveness. In spite of the consolations of religion, which was softened by such deep repentance, Bettina's last words, in a heartrending cry, were, 'Father! Father!'

'Never give your heart but with your hand,' said she to Modeste, an hour before her death; 'and, above all, accept no attentions without my mother's consent or papa's.'

These words, touching in their simple truth, and spoken in the hour of death, found an echo in Modeste's mind, all the more because Bettina made her take a solemn vow. The poor girl, with prophetic insight, drew from under her pillow a ring on which she had had engraved *Pense à*

Bettina, 1827—'Remember Bettina'—instead of a motto, sending it by the hand of her faithful servant Françoise Cochet, to be done in the town. A few minutes before she breathed her last sigh, she placed this ring on her sister's finger, begging her to wear it till she should be married. Thus, between these two girls there had been a strange succession of acute remorse and artless descriptions of that brief summer which had been so soon followed by the autumn winds of desertion, while tears, regrets, and memories were constantly overruled by a dread of evil.

And yet this drama of the young creature seduced, and returning to die of a dreadful disorder under the roof of elegant poverty, the meanness of the Vilquins' son-in-law, and her mother's blindness, resulting from her griefs, only account for the surface of Modeste's character, with which the Dumays and the Latournelles had to be content, for no devotion can fill the mother's place. This monotonous life in the pretty Chalet, among the beautiful flowers grown by Dumay; these habits, as regular as the working of a clock; this provincial propriety; these rubbers at cards by which she sat knitting; this silence, only broken by the moaning of the sea at the equinoxes; this monastic peace covered the stormiest kind of life—the life of ideas, the life of the spiritual world.

We sometimes wonder at the lapses of young girls, but that is when they have no blind mother to sound with her stick the depths of the maiden heart undermined by the caverns of fancy.

The Dumays were asleep when Modeste opened her window, imagining that a man might pass by—the man of her dreams, the knight who would take her on a pillion, defying Dumay's pistols. In her dejection after her sister's death, Modeste had plunged into such constant reading as was enough to make her idiotic. Having been brought up to speak two languages, she was mistress of German as well as of French; then she and Caroline

had learnt English of Madame Dumay. Modeste, who, in such matters, found little supervision from her uncultivated companions, fed her soul on the masterpieces of modern English, German, and French literature —Lord Byron, Goethe, Schiller, Walter Scott, Hugo, Lamartine, Crabbe, Moore, the great works of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, history and the theatre, romance from Rabelais to Manon Lescaut, from Montaigne's *Essays* to Diderot, from the *Fabliaux* to *la Nouvelle Héloïse*, the thoughts of three countries furnished her brain with a medley of images. And her mind was beautiful in its cold guilelessness, its repressed virginal instincts, from which sprang forth, flashing, armed, sincere, and powerful, an intense admiration for genius. To Modeste, a new book was a great event; she was so happy over a great work as to alarm Madame Latournelle, as we have seen, and saddened when it failed to take her heart by storm.

But no gleam of this lurid flame ever appeared on the surface; it escaped the eye of Lieutenant Dumay and his wife as well as of the Latournelles; but the ear of the blind mother could not fail to hear its crackling. The deep contempt which Modeste thenceforth conceived for all ordinary men soon gave her countenance an indescribably proud and shy expression which qualified its German simplicity, but which agrees with one detail of her face; her hair, growing in a point in the middle of her forehead, seems to continue the slight furrow made by thought between her brows, and makes this shy look perhaps a little too wild.

This sweet girl's voice—before his departure Charles Mignon used to call her his little 'Solomon's slipper,' she was so clever—had acquired delightful flexibility of accent from her study of three languages. This advantage is yet further enhanced by a suave fresh quality which goes to the heart as well as to the ear. Though her mother could not see the hope of high destiny stamped on her

daughter's brow, she could study the changes of her soul's development in the tones of that amorous voice.

After this period of ravenous reading, there came to Modeste a phase of the singular faculty possessed by a lively imagination; of living as an actor in an existence pictured as in a dream; of representing things wished for with a vividness so keen, that it verges on reality; of enjoying them in fancy, of devouring time even, seeing herself married, grown old, attending her own funeral, like Charles v.—in short, of playing out the drama of life, and at need that of death too.

As for Modeste, she played the drama of love. She imagined herself adored to the height of her wishes, and passing through every social phase. As the heroine of some dark romance, she loved either the executioner or some villain who died on the scaffold, or else, like her sister, some penniless fop, whose misdemeanours were the affair of the police court. She pictured herself as a courtesan, and laughed men to scorn in the midst of perpetual festivities, like Ninon. By turns, she led the life of an adventuress or of a popular actress, going through the vicissitudes of a Gil Blas, or the triumphs of Pasta, Malibran, Florine. Satiated with horrors, she would come back to real life. She married a notary, she ate the dry bread of respectability, she saw herself in Madame Latournelle. She accepted a laborious life, facing the worries of accumulating a fortune; then she began to romance again: she was loved for her beauty; the son of a peer of France, artistic and eccentric, read her heart, and discerned the star which the genius of a Staël had set on her brow. At last her father returned a millionaire. Justified by experience, she subjected her lovers to tests, preserving her own freedom; she owned a splendid château, servants, carriages, everything that luxury has most curious to bestow; and she mystified her lovers till she was forty, when she accepted an offer.

This edition of the *Arabian Nights*, of which there

was but one copy, lasted nearly a year, and brought Modeste to satiety of invention. She too often held life in the hollow of her hand; she could say to herself very philosophically, and too seriously, too bitterly, too often, 'Well; and then?' not to sink now to her waist in those depths of disgust, into which men of genius fall who are too eager to escape by the vast labour of the task to which they have devoted themselves. But for her rich nature and her youth, Modeste would have retired to a cloister. This satiety flung the girl, still soaked in Catholic feeling, into a love of goodness, and of the infinitude of heaven. She conceived of charity as the occupation of her life; still she groped in forlorn gloom as she found there no aliment for the fancy that gnawed at her heart like a malignant insect in the cup of a flower. She calmly stitched at baby clothes for poor women; and she listened absently to Monsieur Latournelle grumbling at Monsieur Dumay for trumping a thirteenth, or forcing him to play his last trump. Faith led Modeste into a strange path. She fancied that by becoming irreproachable in the Catholic sense, she might achieve such a pitch of sanctity that God would hear her and grant her desires.

'Faith, as Jesus Christ says, can remove mountains; the Saviour made His apostle walk on the Lake of Tiberias; while I only ask of God to send me a husband,' thought she. 'That is much easier than going for a walk on the sea.'

She fasted all through Lent, and did not commit the smallest sin; then she promised herself that on coming out of church on a certain day she would meet a handsome young man, worthy of her, whom her mother would approve, and who would follow her, madly in love. On the day she had fixed for God to send her this angel without fail, she was persistently followed by a horrible beggar; it poured with rain, and there was not one young man out of doors. She went down to the quay

to see the English come on shore, but every Englishman had an English damsel almost as handsome as herself, and Modeste could not see anything like a Childe Harold who had lost his way. At that stage tears rose to her eyes as she sat, like Marius, on the ruins of her imaginings. One day when she made an appointment with God for the third time, she believed that the elect of her dreams had come into the church, and she dragged Madame Latournelle to look behind every pillar, imagining that he was hiding out of delicacy. Thenceforth she concluded that God had no power. She often made conversations with this imaginary lover, inventing question and answer, and giving him a very pretty wit.

Thus it was her heart's excessive ambition, buried in romance, which gave Modeste the discretion so much admired by the good people who watched over her; they might have brought her many a Francisque Althor or Vilquin *fils*, she would not have stooped to such boors. She required simply and purely a man of genius; talent she thought little of, as a barrister is nothing to a girl who is set on an ambassador. She wished for riches only to cast them at her idol's feet. The golden background against which the figures of her dreams stood out was less precious than her heart overflowing with a woman's delicacy; for her ruling idea was to give wealth and happiness to a Tasso, a Milton, a Jean-Jacques Rousseau, a Murat, a Christopher Columbus. Vulgar sorrows appealed but little to this soul, which longed to extinguish the stake of such martyrs unrecognised during their lifetime. Modeste thirsted for unconfessed suffering, the great anguish of the mind.

Sometimes she imagined the balm, she elaborated the tenderness, the music, the thousand devices by which she would have soothed the fierce misanthropy of Jean-Jacques. Again she fancied herself the wife of Lord Byron, and almost entered into his scorn of realities, while making herself as fantastic as the poetry of Manfred,

and into his doubts while making him a Catholic. Modeste accused all the women of the seventeenth century as guilty of Molière's melancholy.

'How is it,' she wondered, 'that some living, wealthy, and beautiful woman does not rush forth to meet every man of genius, to make herself his slave like Lara, the mysterious page?'

As you see, she had quite understood the English poet's wail, as sung by Gulnare. She greatly admired the conduct of the young English girl who came to propose to the younger Crébillon, who married her. The story of Sterne and Eliza Draper was a joy to her for some months; as the imaginary heroine of a similar romance, she studied the sublime part of Eliza again and again. The exquisite feeling so gracefully expressed in those letters filled her eyes with the tears which, it is said, never rose to those of the wittiest of English writers.

Modeste thus lived for some time by her sympathy, not merely with the works, but with the personal character of her favourite authors. Goldsmith, the author of *Obermann*, Charles Nodier, Maturin—the poorest, the most unhappy were her gods; she understood their sufferings, she entered into their squalor, blending with heaven-sent visions; she poured on them the treasures of her heart; she pictured herself clearly as supplying the comforts of life to these artists, martyrs to their gifts. This noble compassion, this intuitive knowledge of the difficulties of work, this worship for talent, is one of the rarest vagaries that ever beat its wings in a woman's soul. At first it is like a secret between her and God, for there is nothing dazzling in it, nothing to flatter her vanity—that potent auxiliary of all actions in France.

From this third phase of her ideas there was born in Modeste a violent desire to study one of these anomalous lives to the very heart of it, to know the springs of

thought, the secret sorrows of genius, and what it craves, and what it is. And so, in her, the rashness of phantasy, the wanderings of her soul in a void, her excursions into the darkness of the future, the impatience of her undeveloped love to centre in an object, the nobleness of her notions of life, her determination to suffer in some lofty sphere rather than to paddle in the slough of provincial life as her mother had done, the vow she had made to herself never to go wrong, to respect her parents' home, and never bring to it anything but joy,—all this world of feeling at last took shape: Modeste purposed to be the wife of a poet, an artist, a man, in short, superior to the crowd; but she meant to choose him, and to subject him to a thorough study, before giving him her heart, her life, her immense tenderness freed from the trammels of passion.

She began by revelling in this pretty romance. Perfect tranquillity possessed her soul. Her countenance was gradually coloured by it. She became the lovely and sublime image of Germany that you have seen, the glory of the Chalet, the pride of Madame Latournelle and the Dumays. Then Modeste lived a double life. She humbly and lovingly fulfilled all the trivial tasks of daily life at the Chalet, using them as a check to hold in the poem of her ideal existence, like the Carthusians, who order their material life by rule, and occupy their time to allow the soul to develop itself in prayer.

All great intellects subject themselves to some mechanical employment to obtain control of thought. Spinoza ground lenses, Bayle counted the tiles in a roof, Montesquieu worked in his garden. The body being thus under control, the spirit spreads its wings in perfect security. So Madame Mignon, who read her daughter's soul, was right. Modeste was in love; she loved with that Platonic sentiment which is so rare, so little understood—the first illusion of girlhood, the subtlest of feelings, the heart's daintiest morsel. She drank deep

draughts from the cup of the unknown, the impossible, the visionary. She delighted in the Blue Bird of the Maiden's Paradise, which sings far away, on which none may lay hands, which lets itself be seen, while the shot of no gun can ever touch it; its magical colours, like the sparkling of gems, dazzle the eye, but it is never more seen when once reality appears—the hideous Harpy bringing witnesses and the *Maire* in her train. To have all the poetry of love without the presence of the lover! How exquisite an orgy! What a fair chimera of all colours and every plumage!

This was the trifling foolish accident which sealed the girl's fate.

Modeste saw on a bookseller's counter a lithographed portrait of de Canalis, one of her favourites. You know what libels these sketches are, the outcome of an odious kind of speculation which falls upon the persons of celebrated men, as if their face were public property. So Canalis, caught in a Byronic attitude, offered to public admiration his disordered hair, his bare throat, and the excessively high forehead proper to every bard. Victor Hugo's brow will lead to as many heads being shaved as there were sucking field-marshals who rushed to die on the strength of Napoleon's glory.

Modeste was struck by this head, made sublime by commercial requirements; and on the day when she bought the portrait, one of the finest books by Arthès had just come out. Though it may sound to her discredit, it must be confessed that she long hesitated between the illustrious poet and the illustrious prose writer. But were these two great men unmarried? Modeste began by securing the co-operation of Françoise Cochet, the girl whom poor Bettina-Caroline had taken with her from le Havre and brought back again. She lived in the town, and Madame Mignon and Madame Dumay would employ her for a day's work in preference to any

other. Modeste had this somewhat homely creature up into her room; she swore that she would never cause her parents the smallest grief, nor exceed the limits imposed on a young lady; she promised Françoise that in the future, on her father's return, the poor girl should have an easy life, on condition of her keeping absolute secrecy as to the service required of her.—What was it?—A mere trifle, a perfectly innocent thing. All that Modeste asked of her accomplice was that she should post certain letters and fetch the replies, addressed to Françoise Cochet.

The bargain concluded, Modeste wrote a polite note to Dauriat, the publisher of Canalis' poems, in which she asked him, in the interests of the great poet, whether Canalis were married, begging him to address the answer to Mademoiselle Françoise, *poste restante*, au Havre. Dauriat, who, of course, could not take such a letter seriously, sent a reply concocted in his private room by five or six journalists, each in turn adding his jest.

'MADEMOISELLE,—'Canalis (Baron de), Constant-Cyr-Melchior, member of the French Academy, born in 1800 at Canalis, Corrèze; stands five feet four, is in good condition, vaccinated, thoroughbred, has served his term under the conscription, enjoys perfect health, has a small landed estate in Corrèze, and wishes to marry, but looks for great wealth.

'His arms are, party per pale gules a broad axe or, and sable a shell argent; surmounted by a baron's coronet; supporters, two larches proper. The motto *Or et fer* (gold and iron) has never proved auriferous.

'The first Canalis, who went to the Holy Land in the first crusade, is mentioned in the Chronicles of Auvergne as carrying no weapon but an axe, by reason of the complete indigence in which he lived, and which has ever since weighed on his posterity. Hence, no doubt, the blazon. The axe brought him nothing but

an empty shell. This noble baron became famous, having discomfited many infidels, and he died at Jerusalem, without either gold or iron, as bare as a worm, on the road to Ascalon, the ambulance service having not yet been called into existence.

'The castle of Canalis—the land yields a few chestnuts—consists of two dismantled towers joined by a wall, remarkable for its superior growth of ivy, and it pays twenty-two francs to the revenue.

'The publisher, undersigned, begs to remark that he pays Monsieur de Canalis ten thousand francs per volume for his poetry. He does not give his empty shells for nothing.

'The Bard of the Corrèze lives at Rue de Paradis-Poissonnière, No. 29, which is a suitable situation for a poet of the Seraphic School. Worms (*les vers*) are a bait for gudgeon. Letters must be prepaid.

'Certain noble dames of the Faubourg Saint-Germain often, it is said, make their way to Paradise and patronise the divinity. King Charles x. thinks so highly of this great poet as to believe him capable of becoming a statesman. He has recently made him an officer of the Legion of Honour, and, which is more to the purpose, Master of Appeals, attached to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. These functions in no way keep the great man from drawing a pension of three thousand francs from the fund devoted to the encouragement of art and letters. This pecuniary success causes, in the publishing world, an eighth plague which Egypt was spared—a plague of worms (*les vers*)!

'The last edition of the works of Canalis, printed on hand-made paper, large 8vo, with vignettes by Bixiou, Joseph Bridau, Schinner, Sommervieux, and others, printed by Didot, is in five volumes, price nine francs, post paid.'

This letter fell like a paving-stone on a tulip. A poet

as Master of Appeals, in the immediate circle of a Minister, drawing a pension, aiming at the red rosette, adored of the ladies of the Faubourg Saint-Germain! Was this at all like the threadbare poet wandering on the quays, melancholy and dreamy, overwrought by work, and climbing up to his garret again loaded with poetic inspiration? At the same time, Modeste saw through the jest of the envious publisher, which conveyed, 'I made Canalis! I made Nathan!' Then she re-read Canalis' verses, very catching verses, full of hypocrisy, and which require a few words of analysis if only to explain her infatuation.

Canalis is distinguished from Lamartine, the chief of the Seraphic School, by a sort of sick-nurse blarney, a perfidious sweetness, and exquisite correctness. If the chief, with his sublime outcry, may be called an eagle, Canalis, all rose and white, is a flamingo. In him women discern the friend they yearn for, a discreet confidant, their interpreter, the being who understands them, and who explains them to themselves.

The broad margins with which Dauriat had graced his last edition were covered with confessions scribbled in pencil by Modeste, who sympathised with this dreamy and tender soul. Canalis has not life in his gift; he does not breathe it into his creations; but he knows how to soothe vague sufferings such as Modeste was a victim to. He speaks to girls in their own language, lulling the pain of the most recent wounds, and silencing groans, and even sobs. His talent does not consist in preaching loftily to the sufferer, in giving her the medicine of strong emotions; he is content to say in a musical voice which commands belief: 'I am unhappy, as you are; I understand you fully; come with me, we will weep together on the bank of this stream, under the willows!' And they go! and listen to his verse, as vacuous and as sonorous as the song of a nurse putting a baby to sleep! Canalis—like Nodier in this—bewitches you by an art-

lessness, which in the prose writer is natural but in the poet elaborately studied, by his archness, his smile, his fallen flowers, his childlike philosophy. He mimics the language of early days well enough to carry you back to the fair field of illusion.

To an eagle we are pitiless; we insist on the quality of the diamond, flawless perfection; but from Canalis we are satisfied with the orphan's mite; everything may be forgiven him. He seems such a good fellow, human above everything. These seraphic airs succeed with him, as those of a woman will always succeed if she acts simplicity well—the startled, youthful, martyred, suffering angel.

Modeste, summing up her impressions, felt that she trusted that soul, that countenance, as attractive as Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's. She paid no heed to the publisher. And so, at the beginning of the month of August, she wrote the following letter to this Dorat of the sacristy, who even now is regarded as one of the stars of the modern Pleiades.

I.

To Monsieur de Canalis.

'Many times ere now, Monsieur, I have intended to write to you—and why? You can guess: to tell you how much I delight in your talent. Yes, I feel a longing to express to you the admiration of a poor country-bred girl, very solitary in her nook, whose sole joy is in reading your poetry. From *René* I came to you. Melancholy tends to reverie. How many other women must have paid you the homage of their secret thoughts! What chance have I of being of the elect in such a crowd? What interest can this paper have, though full of my soul, above all the perfumed letters which beset you? I introduce myself with more to perplex you than

any other woman. I intend to remain unknown, and yet ask your entire confidence, as if you had known me a long time.

'Answer me, be kind to me. I do not pledge myself to tell my name some day, still I do not positively say no. . . . What more can I add to this letter? Regard it, Monsieur, as a great effort, and allow me to offer you my hand—oh, a very friendly hand—that of your servant,

'O. d'Este-M.

'If you do me the favour of replying, address your letter, I beg, to Mademoiselle F. Cochet, Poste Restante, le Havre.'

Now every damsel, whether romantic or no, can imagine Modeste's impatience during the next few days! The air was full of tongues of flame; the trees looked like plumage; she did not feel her body; she floated above nature! The earth vanished under her tread. Wondering at the powers of the post-office, she followed her little sheet of paper through space; she was glad, as we are glad at twenty at the first exercise of our will. She was bewitched, possessed, as people were in the Middle Ages. She pictured to herself the poet's lodgings, his room; she saw him opening the letter, and she made a million guesses.

Having sketched his poetry, it is necessary here to give an outline of the man. Canalis is small and thin, with an aristocratic figure; dark, gifted with a foolish face and a rather insignificant head, that of a man who has more vanity than pride. He loves luxury, display, and splendour. Fortune is a necessity to him more than to other men. No less proud of his birth than of his talent, he has swamped his ancestors by too great personal pretensions. After all, the Canalis are neither Navarreins, nor Cadignans, nor Grandlieus, nor Nègrepelisses; however, nature has done much to support his

pretensions. He has the eyes of Oriental lustre that we look for in a poet, a very pretty refinement of manner, a thrilling voice; but a mannerism that is natural to him almost nullifies these advantages. He is an actor in perfect good faith. He displays a very elegant foot—it is an acquired habit. He has a declamatory style of talk, but it is his own. His affectation is theatrical, but it has become a second nature. These faults, as we must call them, are in harmony with an unfailing generosity which may be termed carpet-knightliness in contrast to chivalry. Canalis has not faith enough to be a Don Quixote, but he is too high-minded not to take invariably the nobler side in any question. His poetry, which comes out in a miliary eruption on every possible occasion, is a great disadvantage to the poet, who is not indeed lacking in wit, but whose talent hinders his wit from developing. He is the slave of his reputation; he aims at seeming superior to it.

Hence, as frequently happens, the man is completely out of tune with the products of his mind. The author of these insinuating, artless poems, full of tender sentiment, of these calm verses as clear as lake ice, of this caressing womanish poetry, is an ambitious little man, buttoned tightly into his coat, with the air of a diplomate, dreaming of political influence, stinking of the aristocrat, scented and conceited, thirsting for a fortune that he may have an income equal to his ambitions, and already spoiled by success under two aspects—the crown of bays and the crown of myrtle. A salary of eight thousand francs, a pension of three thousand, two thousand from the Académie, a thousand crowns of inherited income—a good deal reduced by the agricultural requirements of the Canalis estate, and the ten thousand francs he gets from his poems one year with another—twenty-five thousand francs a year in all.

To Modeste's hero this income was all the more precarious because he spent, on an average, five or six

thousand francs a year more than he received, but hitherto the King's privy purse and the secret funds of the Ministry had made up the deficit. He had composed a hymn for the coronation, for which he had been rewarded with a service of plate; he refused a sum of money, saying that the Canalis owed their homage to the King of France. The *Roi Chevalier* smiled, and ordered from Odiot a costly version of the lines from *Zaïre*.

'What! Rhymester, did you ever hope to vie
With Charles the Tenth in generosity?'

Canalis had drained himself dry, to use a picturesque vulgarism; he knew that he was incapable of inventing a fresh form of poetry; his lyre has not seven strings, it has but one; and so long had he played on it, that the public left him now no choice but to use it to hang himself, or to be silent. De Marsay, who could not endure Canalis, had uttered a sarcasm of which the poisoned dart had pierced the poet's conceit to the quick.

'Canalis,' he had said, 'strikes me as being just like the man of whom Frederic the Great spoke after a battle, as the trumpeter who had never ceased blowing the same note through his penny pipe!'

Canalis was anxious to become a political personage, and as a beginning made capital of a journey he had taken to Madrid when the Duc de Chaulieu was ambassador, accompanying him as *attaché*—but to the Duchess, as the jest went in fashionable drawing-rooms. How often has a jest sealed a man's fate! Colla, the erewhile President of the Cisalpine Republic, and the greatest advocate in Piémont, is told by a friend, at the age of forty, that he knows nothing of botany; he is nettled, he becomes a Jussieu, cultivates flowers, invents new ones, and publishes, in Latin, the *Flora of Piémont*, the work of ten years!

'Well, after all, Canning and Chateaubriand were

statesmen,' said the extinguished poet, 'and in me de Marsay shall find his master!'

Canalis would have liked to write an important political work; but he was afraid of getting into trouble with French prose, a cruelly exacting medium to those who have acquired the habit of taking four Alexandrine lines to express one idea. Of all the poets of the day, only three—Victor Hugo, Théophile Gautier, and de Vigny—have been able to conquer the double glory of a poet and a prose-writer, which was also achieved by Voltaire, Molière, and Rabelais. It is one of the rarest triumphs in French literature, and distinguishes a poet far above his fellows. Our poet of the Faubourg Saint-Germain was therefore very wise to try to find shelter for his chariot under the guardian roof of a Government office.

When he was made Master of Appeals, he felt the need of a secretary, a friend who might fill his place on many occasions, cook his affairs with publishers, see to his fame in the newspapers, and, at a pinch, support him in politics—in short, who would be his satellite. Several men, famous in art, science, or letters, have one or two such followers in Paris, a captain in the Guards, or a Court Chamberlain, who live in the beams of their sunshine, a sort of aides-de-camp intrusted with delicate tasks, allowing themselves to be compromised at need, working round the idol's pedestal, not quite his equals and not quite his superiors, men bold in puffery, the first in every breach, covering his retreats, looking after his business, and devoted to him so long as their illusions last, or till their claims are satisfied. Some at last perceive that their Great Man is ungrateful; others feel that they are being made use of; many weary of the work; and few indeed are satisfied by the mild interchange of sentiment, the only reward to be looked for from an intimacy with a superior man, and which satisfied Ali, raised by Mahomet to his own level. Many, deluded

by their self-conceit, think themselves as clever as their Great Man. Devotion is rare, especially without reward and without hope, as Modeste conceived of it.

Nevertheless, a Menneval is occasionally to be met with ; and, in Paris more than anywhere, men love to live in the shade and to work in silence, Benedictines who have lost their way in a world which has no monastery for them. These valiant lambs bear in their deeds and in their private lives the poetry which writers put into words. They are poets at heart, in their secluded meditations, in their tenderness, as others are poets on paper, in the fields of intellect, and at so much a verse, like Lord Byron—like all those who live, alas! by ink, which in these days is the water of Hippocrene, for which the Government is to blame.

It was a young consulting referendary of the Court of Exchequer who constituted himself the poet's secretary; he was attracted by the poet's fame, and the future prospects of this vaunted political genius, and led by the advice of Madame d'Espard, who thus played the Duchesse de Chaulieu's cards for her ; and Canalis made much of him, as a speculator does of his first shareholder. The beginnings of this alliance had quite an air of friendship. The younger man had already gone through a course of the same kind with one of the Ministers who fell in 1827 ; but the Minister had taken care to find him a place in the Exchequer.

Ernest de la Brière, at that time seven-and-twenty, decorated with the Legion of Honour, with nothing in the world but the emoluments of his office, had the habit of business, and after hanging about the private room of the Prime Minister for four years, he knew a good deal. He was gentle, amiable, with an almost maidenly soul, full of good feeling, and he hated to be seen in the foreground. He loved his country, he yearned to be of use, but brilliancy dazzled him. If he had had his choice, the

place of secretary to a Napoleon would have been more to his mind than that of Prime Minister.

Ernest, having become the friend of Canalis, did great things for him, but in eighteen months he became aware of the shallowness of a nature which was poetical merely in its literary expression. The truth of the homely proverb, 'The cowl does not make the monk,' is especially applicable in literature. It is most rare to find a talent and character in harmony. A man's faculties are not the sum-total of the man. This discord, of which the manifestations are startling, is the outcome of an unexplored—a perhaps unexplorable—mystery. The brain and its products of every kind—since in the arts the hand of man carries out his brain—form a world apart that flourishes under the skull, perfectly independent of the feelings, of what are called the virtues of a citizen, of the head of a family, of a private householder. And yet this is not final; nothing in man is final. It is certain that a debauchee will exhaust his talent in orgies, and a drunkard drown it in his libations, while a good man can never acquire talent by wholesome decency; but it is also almost proved that Virgil, the poet of love, never loved a Dido; and that Rousseau, the pattern citizen, had pride enough to furnish forth a whole aristocracy. Nevertheless, Michael Angelo and Raphael showed the happy concord of talent and character. Hence talent is in men, as far as the individual is concerned, what beauty is in women—a promise. Let us give twofold admiration to the man whose heart and character are equally perfect with his talent.

Ernest, when he detected under the poet an ambitious egoist—the worst species of egoist, for some are amiable—felt a singular diffidence about leaving him. Honest souls do not easily break their bonds, especially those they have voluntarily accepted. The secretary, then, was on very good terms with the poet when Modeste's letter was flying through the mail, but on

the good terms of constant self-effacement. La Brière felt he owed Canalis something for the frankness with which he had revealed himself. And indeed, in this man, who will be accounted great so long as he lives, and made much of, like Marmontel, his defects are the seamy side of brilliant qualities. But for his vanity, his pretentious conceit, he might not have been gifted with that sonorous verbiage which is a necessary instrument in the political life of the day. His shallowness is part of his rectitude and loyalty; his ostentation is paired with liberality. Society profits by the results; the motives may be left to God.

Still, when Modeste's letter arrived, Ernest had no illusions left as to Canalis. The two friends had just breakfasted, and were chatting in the poet's study; he was at that time living in ground-floor rooms looking out on a garden, beyond a courtyard.

'Ah!' cried Canalis, 'I was saying the other day to Madame de Chaulieu that I must cast forth some new poem; admiration is running low, for it is some time since I have had any anonymous letters——'

'An unknown lady?'

'Unknown! A d'Este, and from le Havre! It is evidently an assumed name!'

And Canalis handed the letter to la Brière. This poem, this veiled enthusiasm, in short, Modeste's very heart, was recklessly exposed by the gesture of a coxcomb.

'It is a grand thing,' said the young accountant, 'thus to attract the chastest feelings, to compel a helpless woman to shake off the habits forced upon her by education, by nature, by society, to break through conventionalities. . . . What privileges genius commands! A letter like this in my hand, written by a girl, a genuine girl, without reservation, with enthusiasm . . .'

'Well?' said Canalis.

'Well, if you had suffered as much as Tasso, you

ought to find it reward enough!' exclaimed la Brière.

'So we tell ourselves at the first or at the second letter,' said Canalis. 'But at the thirtieth! . . . but when we have discovered that the young enthusiast is an old hand! . . . but when at the end of the radiant path travelled over by the poet's imagination we have seen some English old maid sitting on a milestone and holding out her hand! . . . but when the angel—by post—turns into a poor creature, moderately good-looking, in search of a husband! . . . Well, then, the effervescence subsides.'

'I am beginning to think,' said la Brière, smiling, 'that glory has something poisonous in it, like certain gorgeous flowers.'

'Besides, my dear fellow,' Canalis went on, 'all these women, even when they are sincere, have an ideal to which we rarely correspond. They never tell themselves that a poet is a man, and a tolerably vain one, as I am accused of being; it never occurs to them that he is rough-ridden by a sort of feverish excitement which makes him disagreeable and uncertain. They want him to be always great, always splendid; they never dream that talent is a disease; that Nathan lives on Florine; that d'Arthez is too fat; that Joseph Bridau is too thin; that Béranger can go on foot; that the divinity may foam at the mouth. A Lucien de Rubempré, a verse-writer, and a pretty fellow, is a Phenix. So why go out of your way to receive bad compliments and sit under the cold shower-bath of a disillusioned woman's helpless stare?'

'Then the true poet,' said la Brière, 'ought to remain hidden, like God, in the centre of his universe, and be visible only in his creations!'

'Then glory would be too dearly paid for,' replied Canalis. 'There is some good in life, I tell you,' said he, taking a cup of tea. 'When a woman of birth and beauty loves a poet, she does not hide herself in the gallery or

the stage-box of a theatre, like a duchess smitten by an actor; she feels strong enough and sufficiently protected by her beauty, by her fortune, by her name, to say, as in every epic poem, "I am the nymph Calypso, and I love Telemachus." Mystification is the resource of small minds. For some time now I have never answered such masqueraders——'

'Oh! how I could love a woman who had come to me!' cried la Brière, restraining a tear. 'It may be said in reply, my dear Canalis, that it is never a poor creature that rises to the level of a celebrated man; she is too suspicious, too vain, too much afraid. It is always a star, a——'

'A Princess,' said Canalis, with a shout of laughter, 'who condescends to him, I suppose?—My dear fellow, such a thing happens once in a century. Such a passion is like the plant that flowers once in a hundred years.—Princesses who are young, rich, and handsome have too much else to do; they are enclosed, like all rare plants, within a hedge of silly men, well born and well bred, and as empty as an elder-stem. My dream, alas! the crystal of my dream hung with garlands of flowers all the way hither from la Corrèze, and with what fervour!—But no more of that!—it is in fragments, at my feet, long since.—No, no, every anonymous letter is a beggar! And what demands they make. Write to this young person, assuming her to be young and pretty, and you will see! You will have your hands full. One cannot in reason love every woman. Apollo, or at any rate, the Apollo Belvedere, is a consumptive dandy who must save his strength.'

'But when a woman comes to you like this,' argued Ernest, 'her excuse must lie in her certainty that she can eclipse the most adored mistress in tenderness, in beauty—and then a little curiosity——'

'Ah!' said Canalis, 'my too youthful Ernest, you must allow me to be faithful to the fair Duchess, who is all my joy!'

'You are right—too right,' replied Ernest.

Nevertheless, the young secretary read and re-read Modeste's letter, trying to guess the mind behind it.

'But there is nothing extravagant in it, no appeal to your genius, only to your heart,' he said to Canalis. 'This perfume of modesty and the exchange proposed would tempt me——'

'Sign it yourself; answer her, and follow up the adventure to the end; it is a poor bargain that I offer you,' exclaimed Canalis, with a smile. 'Go on; you will have something to tell me in three months time, if it lasts three months . . .'

Four days after Modeste received the following letter, written on handsome paper, under a double cover, and sealed with the arms of Canalis.

II.

To Mademoiselle O. d'Este-M.

Mademoiselle,—Admiration for great works—admitting that mine may be great—implies a certain holy simplicity which is a defence against irony and a justification, in the eyes of every tribunal, of the step you have taken in writing to me. Above all, I must thank you for the pleasure which such a testimonial never fails to give, even when undeserved, for the writer of verse and the poet alike secretly believe themselves worthy of them, self-love is a form of matter so far from repellent of praise. The best proof of friendship that I can give to an unknown lady in return for this balm, which heals the stings of criticism, is surely to share with her the harvest of my experience, at the risk of scaring away her living illusions.

'Mademoiselle, the noblest palm a young girl can bear

is that of a saintly, pure, and blameless life. Are you alone in the world? That is a sufficient answer. But if you have a family, a father or a mother, consider all the sorrows that a letter like yours may entail—written to a poet whom you do not know. Not every writer is an angel; they have their faults. Some are fickle, reckless, conceited, ambitious, dissipated; and imposing as innocence must be, chivalrous as a French poet may be, you might find more than one degenerate bard willing to encourage your affection only to betray it. Then your letter would not be interpreted as I read it. He would find a meaning in it which you have not put there, and which in your innocence you do not even suspect. Many authors, many natures!

'I am extremely flattered by your having thought me worthy to understand you; but if you had addressed yourself to an insincere talent, to a cynic whose writings were melancholy while his life was a continual carnival, you might have found at the end of your sublime imprudence some bad man, a dangler behind the scenes, or wine-shop hero! You, under the arbour of clematis where you dream over poetry, cannot smell the stale cigar-smoke which de-poetises the manuscript; just as when you go to a ball, dressed in the dazzling products of the jeweller's skill, you never think of the sinewy arms, the toilers in their shirt-sleeves, the wretched workshops whence spring these radiant flowers of handicraft.

'Go further. What is there in the solitary life of reverie that you lead—by the seashore, no doubt—to interest a poet whose task it is to divine everything, since he must describe everything? Our young girls here are so highly accomplished, that no daughter of Eve can vie with them! What reality was ever so good as a dream? And you now, you, a young girl brought up to be the duteous mother of a family, what would you gain by an initiation into the terrible excitement of a poet's life in this appalling capital, to be defined only as a hell we love.

'If you took up your pen, prompted by the wish to enliven your monotonous existence as an inquisitive girl, has not this a semblance of depravity? What meaning am I to attribute to your letter? Are you one of a caste of reprobates, seeking a friend at a distance? Are you cursed with ugliness, and do you feel you have a noble soul with none to trust? Alas!—a sad conclusion—you have either gone too far, or not far enough. Either let it end here, or, if you persist, tell me more than in the letter you have already written.

'But, Mademoiselle, if you are young, if you have a family, if you feel that you bear in your heart a heavenly spikenard, to be shed, as the Magdalen shed hers on Christ's feet, suffer yourself to be appreciated by some man who is worthy of you, and become what every good girl should be—an admirable wife, the virtuous mother of children. A poet is the poorest conquest any young woman can aspire to; he has too much vanity, too many salient angles which must run counter to the legitimate vanity of a wife, and bruise the tenderness which has no experience of life. The poet's wife should love him for long before marrying him; she must resign herself to be as charitable and as indulgent as the angels, to all the virtues of motherhood. These qualities, Mademoiselle, exist only as a germ in a young girl.

'Listen to the whole truth; do I not owe it you in return for your intoxicating flattery? Though it may be glorious to marry a great celebrity, a woman soon discovers that a man, however superior, is but a man like all others. He then the less fulfils her hopes, because miracles are expected of him. A famous poet is then in the predicament of a woman whose overpraised beauty makes us say, 'I had pictured her as handsomer'; she does not answer to the requirements of the portrait sketched by the same fairy to whom I owe your letter—Imagination!

'Again, great qualities of mind develop and flourish

only in an invisible sphere; the poet's wife sees only the unpleasant side of it; she sees the jewels made instead of wearing them. If the brilliancy of an exceptional position is what fascinates you, I warn you, its pleasures are soon exhausted. You would be provoked to find so much that is rough in a situation which from afar looks so smooth, so much ice on a glittering height! And then, as women never have set foot in the world of difficulty, they presently cease to value what they once admired, when they fancy that they have understood the workmanship at a glance.

'I will conclude with a last reflection, which you will do wrong to mis-read as an entreaty in disguise; it is the advice of a friend. A communion of souls cannot be complete excepting between two persons who are prepared to conceal nothing. Could you show yourself as you really are to a stranger? I pause before the consequences of such a notion.

'Accept, Mademoiselle, all the respect we owe to every woman, even to those who are unknown, and who wear a mask.'

To think that she had carried this letter between her skin and her stays, under the scorching busk, for a whole day! . . . that she had postponed reading it till an hour when everybody was asleep, till midnight, after waiting for the solemn hour in the pangs of a fiery imagination! . . . that she had blessed the poet, had read in fancy a thousand letters, had conceived of everything excepting this drop of cold water shed on the most diaphanous visions of fancy, and destroying them as prussic acid destroys life! . . . It was enough to make her hide her face—as Modeste did—under her sheets though she was alone, and put out the candle, and weep.

All this happened in the early days of July. Modeste presently got up, paced her room, and then opened the window. She wanted air. The scent of flowers came

up to her with the peculiar freshness of night-perfumes. The sea, lighted up by the moon, twinkled like a mirror. A nightingale was singing in the Vilquins' park.

'Ah! there is the poet!' said Modeste to herself, her anger dying out.

The bitterest reflections crowded on her mind. She was stung to the quick; she wanted to read the letter again. She relighted the candle, and studied this careful production, till at last she heard the early voices of real life.

'He is in the right, and I am in the wrong,' thought she. 'But how could I expect to find one of Molière's old men under the star-spangled robe of a poet?'

When a woman or a girl is caught red-handed, she feels intense hatred of the witness, the first cause, or the object of her folly. And so Modeste, genuine, natural, and coy, felt her heart swell with a dreadful longing to trample on this essence of rectitude, and throw him over into some abyss of contradiction, to pay him back this stunning blow.

The pure-hearted child, whose head alone had been corrupted by her reading, by her sister's long agony, and by the perilous meditations of her solitude, was roused by a sunbeam falling on her face. She had lain for three hours tacking about on the immense ocean of doubt. Such nights are never forgotten.

Modeste went at once to her little lacquer table, her father's gift, and wrote a letter dictated by the infernal spirit of revenge which disports itself at the bottom of a young girl's heart.

III.

To Monsieur de Canalis.

'Monsieur,—'You are certainly a great poet, but you are something better—an honest man. After showing

so much frank loyalty to a young girl on the verge of an abyss, have you enough to reply without the least hypocrisy or evasion to this question—

'Would you have written the letter I have received in answer to mine—would your ideas, your language, have been the same if some one had whispered in your ear, what may be true: "Mademoiselle O. d'Este-M. has six millions of francs, and does not want to have a simpleton for her master"?

'For one moment admit this hypothesis for a fact. Be as honest with me as with yourself; fear nothing, I am superior to my twenty years, nothing that is genuine can injure you in my estimation. When I shall have read that confession, if indeed you vouchsafe to make it to me, you shall have an answer to your first letter.

'After admiring your talent, which is often sublime, allow me to do homage to your delicacy and rectitude, which compel me to sign myself

'Your humble servant,

'O. d'Este-M.'

When this note was placed in la Brière's hands, he went out to walk on the Boulevards, tossed in his soul like a light bark in a tempest when the wind blows every minute from a different point of the compass. One of the young men of whom we meet so many—a true Parisian, would have summed up the case in these words, 'An old hand!' But to a young fellow whose soul is lofty and refined, this sort of implied oath, this appeal to veracity, had the power to arouse the three judges that lurk at the bottom of every conscience. And Honour, Truth, and Justice, rising erect, cried aloud.

'Ah! my dear Ernest,' said Truth, 'you certainly would not have written a lecture to a rich heiress. No, no, my boy, you would have set off, nose on for le Havre, to find out whether the young lady were handsome, and you would have been much aggrieved by the preference

given to genius. And if you could only have tripped your friend up, and have made yourself acceptable in his place, Mademoiselle d'Este would have been divine!'—'What,' said Justice, 'you pity yourselves, you men of brains or wit, and without cash, when you see rich girls married to men whom you would not employ as porters; you run amuck against the sordidness of the age, which is eager to wed money with money, and never to unite some fine young fellow full of talent to a rich and high-born beauty; now here is one who rebels against the spirit of the time, and the poet retorts with a blow on her heart!'—'Rich or poor, young or old, handsome or plain, this girl is in the right, she has brains, she casts the poet into the mire of self-interest,' cried Honour. 'She deserves a sincere, noble, and honest reply, and, above all, the true expression of your thought! Examine yourself. Sound your heart, and purge it of its meannesses! What would Molière's Alceste say?'—And la Brière, starting from the Boulevard Poissonnière, lost in meditation, walked so slowly, that at the end of an hour he had but just reached the Boulevard des Capucines. He returned by the quays to the Exchequer, at that time situated near the Sainte-Chapelle. Instead of verifying accounts, he sat under the spell of his perplexities.

'She has not six millions, that is clear,' said he to himself; 'but that is not the question . . .'

Six days later Modeste received the following letter.

IV.

To Mademoiselle O. d'Este-M.

'Mademoiselle,—You are not a d'Este. That is an assumed name to conceal your own. Are such revelations as you request due to a person who is false

as to her identity? Attend; I will answer your question by asking another, Are you of illustrious parentage? of noble birth? of a family of townsfolk?

'Morality indeed cannot change; it is one; but its obligations vary in different spheres. As the sun sheds a different light on different aspects, producing the variety we admire, morality makes social duty conform to rank and position. What is a peccadillo in the soldier, is a crime in the general, and *vice versa*. The proprieties are not the same for a peasant girl who reaps the field, for a workwoman at fifteen sous a day, for the daughter of a small shopkeeper, for a young girl of the middle class, for the child of a rich commercial house, for the heiress of a noble family, for a daughter of the race of Este. A king must not stoop to pick up a gold coin, and a workman must turn back to look for a piece of ten sous he has dropped, though both alike ought to observe the laws of economy. A d'Este owning six millions of francs may wear a broad-brimmed hat and feathers, flourish a riding whip, mount an Arab horse, and come as an Amazon in gold lace, followed by a groom, to say to a poet, "I love poetry, and I desire to expiate the wrongs done by Leonora to Tasso," while the daughter of a merchant would be simply ridiculous in imitating her.

'To what social class do you belong? Answer truly, and I will as truly reply to the question you ask me.

'Not being so happy as to know you, though already bound to you by a sort of poetical communion, I do not like to offer you any vulgar homage. It is already a triumph of mischief for you perhaps to have perplexed a man whose books are published.'

The young accountant was not lacking in the skill of fence which a man of honour may allow himself. By return of post he received this reply.

V.

To Monsieur de Canalis.

'You are more and more cautious, my dear poet. My father is a count. The most distinguished member of our family was a cardinal, in the days when cardinals were the equals of kings. At the present day our race, almost extinct, ends in me; but I have the necessary quarterings to admit me to any Court or any Chapter. In short, we are a match for the Canalis. Excuse my not forwarding our coat-of-arms.

'Try to write as sincerely as I do. I await your reply to know whether I may still subscribe myself, as now,

'Your servant,

'O. d'Este-M.'

'What advantage the young person takes of her position!' exclaimed la Brière. 'But is she truthful?'

It is not for nothing that a man has been for four years a Minister's private secretary; that he has lived in Paris and watched its intrigues; and the purest soul is always more or less intoxicated by the heady atmosphere of the Empress city. La Brière, rejoicing that he was not Canalis, secured a place in the mail-coach for le Havre, after writing a letter in which he promised a reply by a certain day, excusing the delay by the importance of the confession required of him, and the business of his office. He took the precaution of obtaining from the Director-General of the Mails a line enjoining silence and compliance on the head of the office at le Havre. He could thus wait to see Françoise Cochet arrive at the office, and quietly follow her home. Guided by her, he mounted the hill of Ingouville, and saw Modeste Mignon at the window of the Chalet.

'Well, Françoise?' asked the girl.

'Yes, Mademoiselle, I have got one.'

Ernest, struck by this celestially fair type of beauty, turned on his heel, and inquired of a passer-by the name of the owner of that splendid residence.

'That?' asked the native, pointing to the great house.

'Yes, my good fellow.'

'Oh, that belongs to Monsieur Vilquin, the richest shipowner of the place, a man who does not know how much he has.'

'I know of no Cardinal Vilquin in history,' said the accountant to himself, as he went down the town again, to return to Paris.

Of course, he questioned the postmaster as to the Vilquin family. He learned that the Vilquins owned an immense fortune; that Monsieur Vilquin had a son and two daughters, one of them married to young Monsieur Althor. Prudence saved la Brière from showing any adverse interest in the Vilquins; the postmaster was already looking at him with suspicion.

'Is there no one at the house just now besides the family?' he asked.

'Just at present the Hérouville family are there. There is some talk of a marriage between the young Duke and the second Mademoiselle Vilquin.'

'There was a famous Cardinal d'Hérouville,' thought la Brière, 'in the time of the Valois; and, under Henri IV., the terrible Marshal, who was created Duke.'

Ernest returned, having seen enough of Modeste to dream of her; to believe that, rich or poor, if she had a noble soul, he would gladly make her Madame la Brière, and he determined to carry on the correspondence.

Do your utmost, hapless Frenchwomen, to remain unknown, to weave the very least little romance in the midst of a civilisation which takes note on public squares of the hour when every hackney cab comes and goes,

which counts every letter and stamps them twice at the exact hours when they are posted and when they are delivered, which numbers the houses, which registers each floor on the schedule of taxes, after making a list of the windows and doors, which ere long will have every acre of land, down to the smallest holdings and its most trifling details, laid down on the broad sheets of a survey —a giant's task, by command of a giant! Try, rash maidens, to evade—not, indeed, the eye of the police, but the ceaseless gossip which, in the poorest hamlet, scrutinises your most trivial acts, counts the dishes at the Préfet's dessert, and sees the melon rind outside the door of the small annuitant, which tries to hear the chink of gold when Economy adds it to her treasury, and every evening, over the fire, sums up the incomes of the village, of the town, of the department!

Modeste, by a commonplace mistake, had escaped the most innocent espionage, for which Ernest already blamed himself. But what Parisian could endure to be the dupe of a little country girl? Never be duped! This odious maxim is a solvent for all man's noble sentiments. From the letter he wrote, where every lash of the scourge of conscience has left its mark, the reader may easily imagine the conflict of feelings to which the honest youth was a prey.

A few days later, Modeste, sitting at her window on a fine summer day, read the following pages.

VI.

To Mademoiselle O. d'Este-M.

'Mademoiselle,—Without hypocrisy, yes, if I had been sure that you had an immense fortune, I should have acted quite differently. Why? I have sought the reason, and it is this. There is in us an

inborn feeling, developed, too, to an extreme by society, which urges us to seek and to seize happiness. Most men confound happiness with the means to happiness, and in their eyes fortune is its chief element. I should therefore have endeavoured to please you, spurred by the social instinct that has in all ages made wealth a religion. At least, I think so. The wisdom which substitutes good sense for impulse is not to be looked for in a man who is still young; and when the prey is in sight, the animal instinct lurking in the heart of man urges him on. Thus, instead of a lecture, I should have sent you compliments and flattery.

'Should I have respected myself? I doubt it. Mademoiselle, in such a case, success brings absolution; but as to happiness, that is another matter. Should I not distrust my wife if I won her thus? Most certainly. Your action would, sooner or later, have resumed its true character; your husband, however great you might deem him, would at last have reproached you for having humiliated him; and you, sooner or later, might have learned to despise him. An ordinary man cuts the Gordian knot of a marriage for money with the sword of tyranny. A strong man forgives. The poet bewails himself. This, Mademoiselle, is the answer given by my honesty.

'Now, attend to me well. Yours is the triumph of having made me reflect deeply, both on you, whom I know not enough, and on myself, whom I know but little. You have had the skill to stir up the evil thoughts that grovel at the bottom of every heart; but in me the outcome has been a generous something, and I hail you with my most grateful blessings, as, at sea, we hail a lighthouse warning us of rocks where we might have been wrecked.

'And now for my confession, for I would not lose your esteem nor my own for the price of all the treasures on earth. I was bent on knowing who you were. I

have just come back from le Havre, where I saw Françoise Cochet, followed her to Ingouville, and saw you in your magnificent villa. You are as lovely as a poet's dream of woman; but I know not whether you are Mademoiselle Vilquin hidden under Mademoiselle d'Hérouville, or Mademoiselle d'Hérouville hidden under Mademoiselle Vilquin. Though all is fair in war, I blushed at playing the spy, and I paused in my investigations. You piqued my curiosity; owe me no grudge for having been so womanly, is it not a poet's privilege? Now I have opened my heart to you; I have let you read it; you may believe in the sincerity of what I am about to add. Brief as was the glimpse I had of you, it was enough to modify my opinion. You are a poet and a poem even before being a woman. Yes, there is in you something more precious than beauty; you are the ideal of art, of fancy.

'The step you took, blameable in a young girl fated to a commonplace existence, is different in one gifted with such a character as I suppose you to have. Among the vast number of beings flung by chance into social life to make up a generation, there are exceptions. If your letter is the outcome of long poetical musing on the lot which the law reserves for women; if, carried away by the vocation of a superior and cultivated mind, you have wished to know something of the intimate life of a man to whom you concede the chance endowment of genius, in order to create a friendship with a soul akin to your own, exempt from vulgar conditions, and evading all the limitations of your sex—you are indeed an exception! The law which is good to measure the actions of the crowd is then very narrow to qualify your determination. But then the words of my first letter recur in all their meaning, "You have done too much or not enough."

'Once more accept my thanks for the service you have done me in compelling me to probe my heart; for

you have cured me of the error, common enough in France, of regarding marriage as a means to fortune. In the midst of the disturbance of my conscience a sacred voice has spoken. I have solemnly sworn to myself to make my own fortune, that my choice of a wife may never be determined by mercenary motives. Finally, I have blamed and repressed the unbecoming curiosity you aroused in me. You have not six millions. It would be impossible at le Havre that a young lady possessed of such a fortune should remain unknown, and you would have been betrayed by the pack of those aristocratic families which I see in pursuit of heiresses here in Paris, and which has sent the King's chief equerry on a visit to your Vilquins. So the sentiments I express are put forward as a positive rule, apart from all romance or statement of fact.

'Now, prove to me that you have one of those souls which we allow to disobey the common law, and you will grant in your mind that this second letter is in the right as well as the first. You are destined to a middle-class life; obey the iron law that holds society together. You are a superior woman, and I admire you; but if you are bent on yielding to the instinct you ought to repress, I pity you; these are the conditions of the social state. The admirable moral of the domestic epic *Clarissa Harlowe* is that the victim's love, though legitimate and sincere, leads to her ruin, because it has its rise and progress in defiance of her family. The family, silly and cruel as it is, is in its rights as against Lovelace. The family is society.

'Believe me, for a girl, as for a wife, her glory will always consist in restraining her ardent whims within the strictest limits of propriety. If I had a daughter who might become a Madame de Staël, I would wish that she might die at fifteen. Can you think, without the acutest regret, of your own child exhibited on the stage of celebrity and parading to win the applause of

the mob? However high a woman may have raised herself in the secret poetry of her dreams, she must sacrifice her superiority on the altar of family life. Her soaring moods, her genius, her aspirations towards the lofty and the sublime, all the poem of a girl's soul belongs to the man she accepts, the children she may bear. I discern in you a secret ambition to enlarge the narrow circle of life to which every woman is condemned, and to bring passion and love into your marriage. Ah! it is a beautiful dream; it is not impossible; it is difficult; but it has been realised to bring incompatible souls—forgive me a word which has become ridiculous—to desperation.

'If you look for a sort of Platonic regard, it can only lead you to despair in the future. If your letter was a sport, play no more. And so this little romance ends, does it not? It will not have been altogether barren of fruit; my honesty has taken up arms; and you, on your part, have learnt something certain about social life. Turn your gaze on real life, and throw the transient enthusiasm to which literature has given birth into the virtues of your sex. Farewell, Mademoiselle; do me the honour of granting me your esteem. Since seeing you—or her whom I believe to be you—your letter has seemed to me quite natural; so fair a flower would instinctively turn towards the sun of poetry. So love poetry still, as you doubtless love flowers and music, the sumptuous grandeur of the sea, the beauties of Nature—all as ornaments of the soul; but remember all I have had the honour of telling you about poets. Be sure you do not marry an ass; seek with care for the mate God has created for you. There are, take my word for it, many clever men capable of appreciating you and of making you happy. If I were rich, and you were poor, I would some day lay my fortune and my heart at your feet, for I believe you have a soul full of riches and of loyalty; and I would intrust you with my life and

honour in the fullest confidence. Once more farewell, fair daughter of fair Eve.'

On reading this letter—at one gulp, like a drink of cold water in a desert—the mountain weighing on Modeste's heart was lifted; then, perceiving the mistakes she had made in carrying out her scheme, she corrected them at once by making some wrappers for Françoise, on which she wrote her own address at Ingouville, desiring her to come no more to the Chalet. Thenceforth Françoise was to go home, place each letter as it came from Paris in one of these wrappers, and privily repost it in the town. Modeste promised herself always to meet the postman, standing at the front door at the hour when he should pass.

As to the feelings excited in Modeste by this reply, in which poor la Brière's noble heart throbbed under the brilliant mask of Canalis, they were as infinite as the waves which rolled up to die one after another on the shore, while, with her eyes fixed on the ocean, she gave herself up to the joy of having harpooned an angel's soul, so to speak, in the sea of Paris, of having discerned that in a really superior man the heart may sometimes be on a par with genius, and of having been well advised by the voice of presentiment. A mastering interest would henceforth inspire her life. The enclosure of her pretty home, the wires of her cage were broken. Thought could soar on widespread wings.

'Oh, dear father,' she cried, looking across to the horizon, 'make us very rich!'

Her answer, which Ernest de la Brière read five days later, will tell more than any comments can.

VII.

To Monsieur de Canalis.

'My Friend,—Let me call you so—you have enchanted me, and I would not have you other than you are in this letter—the first; oh, let it not be the last! Who but a poet could ever have so perfectly excused and understood a girl?

'I wish to speak to you with the same sincerity as that which dictated the opening lines of your letter.

'In the first place, happily, you do not know me. I can tell you, gladly, that I am neither that frightful Mademoiselle Vilquin, nor that most noble and most faded Mademoiselle d'Hérouville, who hovers between thirty and fifty, and cannot make up her mind to a creditable age. Cardinal d'Hérouville flourished in Church history before the cardinal who is our only pride, for I do not count lieutenant-generals, or abbés who write small volumes of too big verse, as celebrities.

'Also, I do not live in the Vilquins' gorgeous villa; thank God, not the millionth part of a drop of their blood, chilled in many a counting-house, flows in my veins. I am by birth partly German, partly a child of Southern France; in my brain lurks Teutonic sentiment, and in my blood the energy of the Provençal. I am of noble birth both on my father's and my mother's side; through my mother I have connections on every page of the *Almanach de Gotha*. But I have taken every precaution; it is not in the power of any man, not even of the police, to lift my disguise. I shall remain shrouded, unknown. As to myself and my belongings, *mes propres*, as they say in Normandy, be quite easy; I am at least as good-looking as the little person—happy, though she knows it not—on whom your eyes fell; and I do not think myself a pauper, though I am not attended in my

walks by ten sons of peers! I have even seen the contemptible farce played in my behoof of the heiress adored for her millions.

'Finally, make no attempt to find me, not even to win a bet. Alas! though free, I am guarded; in the first place, by myself, and then by very brave folks, who would not hesitate to stick a knife in your heart if you tried to penetrate this retreat. I say this, not to incite your courage or your curiosity; I believe no such sentiments are needed to arouse your interest in me, or to secure your attachment.

'I now proceed to reply to the second and greatly enlarged edition of your sermon.

'Shall I make a confession? When I found you so suspicious, taking me for a *Corinne*—how her improvisations have bored me!—I said to myself that many a tenth Muse had, ere now, led you by the tow-line of curiosity into her inmost vales, and proposed to you to taste the fruits of her school-girl Parnassus. . . . Be quite easy, my friend; though I love poetry, I have no copies of verses in my blotting-book; my stockings are, and will remain, perfectly white. You will not be bored by any "trifles" in one or two volumes. In short, if I should ever say to you, "Come," you know now that you will not find an old maid, ugly and penniless. . . .

'Oh! my friend, if you could only know how much I regret that you should have come to le Havre! You have altered the aspect of what you call my romance. God alone can weigh in His Almighty hands the treasure I had in store for a man great enough, confiding and clear-sighted enough, to set out on the strength of my letters, after having made his way step by step through all the recesses of my heart, and to come to our first meeting with the guilelessness of a child! I dreamed of such innocence in a genius; you have marred that treasure. I forgive you; you live in Paris; and, as you say, a poet is a man.

F

'Will you, therefore, take me to be a silly schoolgirl, cherishing the enchanted garden of illusions? Nay, do not amuse yourself with throwing stones at the broken windows of a long ruined castle. You, a man of wit, how is it that you never guessed that Mademoiselle d'Este had already read herself the lecture contained in your first letter? No, my dear poet, my first note was a pebble flung by a boy loitering along the highway, who thinks it fun to startle a landowner reading his tax-paper under shelter of his fruit-trees; or, rather, was the line carefully fixed by a fisherman from the top of a rock by the seashore, in hope of a miraculous draught.

'All you say so beautifully about family ties has my approbation. The man I shall love, and of whom I shall think myself worthy, shall have my heart and my life with my parents' consent. I would neither distress nor startle them; I am certain of overruling them, and they have no prejudices. Again, I am strong enough to defy the illusions of my fancy. I have built a stronghold with my own hands, and have allowed it to be fortified by the unbounded devotion of those who watch over me as a treasure—not that I am not strong enough to defend myself in open fight; for, I may tell you, fate has clothed me in well-tempered armour on which is stamped the word DISDAIN. I have the deepest horror of everything which suggests self-interest, of all that is not entirely noble, pure, and disinterested. Without being romantic, I worship the beautiful and the ideal; though I have been romantic, all to myself, in my dreams. And so I could recognise the truth—true even to platitude—of what you wrote me as to social life.

'For the present, we are only, and can only be, friends. —Why seek a friend among the unknown? you will ask. Your person is unknown to me; but your mind and heart are known to me; I like them, and I am conscious of infinite feelings in my soul, which demand a man of

genius as their only confidant. I do not want the poem of my heart to be wasted; it shall be as beautiful for you as it would have been for God alone. What a precious thing is a trusty comrade to whom we may say what we will! Can you reject the unspoiled blossoms of a genuine girl? They will fly to you as gnats fly to the sunbeams. I am sure that your intellect has never before won you such a success—the confidences of a young girl. Listen to her prattle, accept the songs she has hitherto sung only for herself.

'By and by, if our souls are really akin, if on trial our characters agree, some day an old white-haired retainer will await you, standing by the roadside, and conduct you to a châlet, a villa, a castle, a palace—I do not yet know of what type that temple of Hymen may be—brown and gold, the colours of Austria, which marriage has made so powerful—nor whether such a conclusion may be possible; but confess that it is poetical, and that Mademoiselle d'Este has good ideas. Does she not leave you free? Does she come on jealous tiptoe to glance round Paris drawing-rooms? Does she lay on you the task of some high emprise, the chains which paladins of old voluntarily hung on their arm? What she asks of you is a really spiritual and mystical alliance.

'Come, come to my heart whenever you are unhappy, wounded, weary. Tell me everything, conceal nothing; I shall have balm for all your sorrows. I, my friend, am but twenty; but my mind is fifty, and I have unhappily known through another, my second self, the horrors and ecstasies of passion. I know all that the human heart can possibly contain of meanness and infamy, and yet I am the most honest girl living. No; I have no illusions left; but I have something better—faith and religion. There, I have played first in our game of confidences.

'Whoever my husband may be, if he is my own choice, he may sleep in peace; he might sail for the Indies, and on his return he would find me finishing the

tapestry begun at his departure; no eyes would have looked into mine, no man's voice would have tainted the air in my ear; in every stitch he might find a line of the poem of which he was the hero. Even if I should have been taken in by a fair and false exterior, that man would have every flower of my thought, every refinement of my tenderness, all the wordless sacrifices of proud and never suppliant resignation. Yes, I have vowed to myself never even to go out with my husband when he does not want me; I will be the divinity of his hearth. This is my human religion.—But why should I not test and choose the man to whom I shall be what life is to the body? Does a man ever find life an inconvenience? What is a wife who annoys her husband? Not life, but a sickness. By life, I mean the perfect health which makes every hour an enjoyment.

'To return to your letter, which will always be dear to me. Yes, jesting apart, it really contains what I had hoped for—the expression of prosaic sentiments, which are as necessary to family life as air is to the lungs, and without which happiness is out of the question. What I hoped for in my friend was, that he should act as an honest man, think as a poet, love as women love; and this is now, beyond a doubt, no longer a chimera.

'Farewell, my friend. At present I am poor. That is one of the reasons which make me cling to my mask, my incognito, my impenetrable fortress.

'I read your last poem in the *Revue*, and with what delight, after having mastered the austere and secret loftiness of your soul!

'Will it aggrieve you greatly to be told that a girl beseeches God fervently in your behalf, that she makes you her one thought, and that you have no rival in her heart but her father and mother? Can there be any reason why you should reject these pages that are full of you, that are written for you, that none but you will read? Repay me in kind. I am as yet so little a

woman, that your effusions, so long as they are genuine and full, will suffice for the happiness of your

'O. d'Este-M.'

'Great Heavens! am I in love with her already!' exclaimed the young referendary, when he discovered that he had been sitting for an hour with this letter in his hand after having read it. 'What must I do next? She believes she is writing to our great poet. Ought I to carry on the deception? Is she a woman of forty, or a girl of twenty?'

Ernest was fascinated by the abyss of the unknown. The unknown is dark infinitude, and nothing is more enthralling. From that murky vastness flash fires which rend it from time to time, and light up visions like those of Martin. In a life as full as that of Canalis, an adventure of this kind is swept away like a cornflower among the boulders of a torrent; in that of a young referendary awaiting the reinstatement in power of the party of which his patron was the representative, and who, as a precaution, was dry-nursing Canalis for parliament, this pretty girl—his imagination persistently believed her to be the fair-haired damsel he had seen—was bound to find a place in his heart, and commit all the ravages caused by a romance when it breaks into a humdrum existence, like a wolf into a farmyard. So Ernest thought a great deal about his unknown correspondent, and he replied by the following letter—an elaborate and pretentious letter, but already betraying some passion by its tone of annoyance.

VIII.

To Mademoiselle O. d'Este-M.

'Mademoiselle,—Is it quite fair in you to come and establish yourself in a poor poet's heart with the admitted

purpose of leaving him to his fate if he should not be to your mind, and bequeathing to him perennial regrets after showing him, for a few minutes, an image of perfection were it but assumed, or, at least, a first promise of happiness?

'I was wanting in foresight when I requested the letter in which you have begun the display of your elegant assortment of ideas. A man may well fall in love with a stranger who can unite so much daring with so much originality, such fancy with such feeling. Who but would long to know you after reading these first confidences? It is only by a really great effort that I preserve my balance when I think of you, for in you are combined all things that can disturb a man's heart and brain. So I take advantage of the remains of coolness I am able to preserve to put the case humbly before you.

'Do you believe, Mademoiselle, that letters which are more or less truthful in relation to life as it really is, and more or less insincere, since the letters we may write to each other must be the expression of the moment when we send them forth, and not the general outcome of our characters—do you believe, I ask, that however fine they may be, these letters can ever take the place of the expression of ourselves we should give through the practical evidence of daily life? Each man is twofold: There is the invisible life of the spirit, which letters may satisfy, and the mechanical life, to which we attach, alas! more importance than you, at your age, can imagine. These two existences ought both to agree with the ideal you cherish, and this, it may be said, very rarely happens.

'The pure, spontaneous, disinterested homage of a solitary soul, at once well-informed and chaste, is one of those heavenly flowers whose colour and fragrance are a consolation for every grief, every wound, every mortification entailed by a literary life in Paris; and I thank you

with a fervour equal to your own ; but after this poetical exchange of my woes in return for the pearls of your charity, what can you expect ? I have neither the genius nor the splendid position of Lord Byron ; above all, I have not the halo of his artificial damnation and his imaginary social grievances ; but what would you have hoped for from him in similar circumstances ? His friendship, no doubt. Well, he, who ought only to have been proud, was eaten up by an offensive and sickly vanity which discouraged friendship. I, who am a thousand times less great than he—may not I too have such discords of nature as make life unpleasing, and turn friendship into the most difficult burthen ? What will you get in return for your dreams ? The vexations of a life which will not be wholly yours.

'The bargain is a mad one, for this reason : The poetry of your dreams is but a plagiarism. A young German girl, not half-German like you, but wholly German, in the intoxication of her twenty years, adored Goethe ; she made him her friend, her religion, her god, knowing that he was married. Frau Goethe, a good German soul, a poet's wife, lent herself to this worship with very shrewd complacency—which failed to cure Bettina ! But what was the end ? The ecstatic married some substantial worthy German. Between ourselves, let us confess that a girl who should have made herself the handmaid of a genius, who should have raised herself to his level by understanding him, and have adored him piously till her death—as one of those divine figures might have done that painters have represented on the doors of their mystical shrines—and who, when Germany should lose Goethe, would have retired to some wilderness never more to see mankind—as Lord Bolingbroke's lady did—let us confess that this girl would have lived for ever in the poet's glory as Mary Magdalen does in the blood-stained triumph of the Saviour.

'If this is sublime, what do you say to the converse of it ?

'Being neither Lord Byron nor Goethe, but merely the writer of a few approved poems, I cannot claim the honours of worship. I have little in me of the martyr. I have a heart, but I am also ambitious, for I have to make my fortune, and I am yet young. See me as I am. The King's favour and the patronage of his Ministers afford me a decent maintenance; I have all the habits of a very commonplace man. I go to evening parties exactly like the first fool you meet; but my carriage-wheels do not run, as the present times require, on ground made solid under me by securities in the State funds.

'Though I am not rich, I have not, on the other hand, the distinction conferred by a garret, by neglected work, by glory in penury, on certain men of greater merit than mine; for instance, on d'Arthez.

'What prosaic fifth act will you not find for the enchanted fancy of your young enthusiasm? Let it rest here. If I have been so happy as to seem to you an earthly wonder, you will have been to me something radiant and supernal, like a star that blazes and vanishes. Let nothing tarnish this episode in our lives. By remaining as we are, I may love you, going through one of those mad passions which break down every obstacle and light fires in the heart, which are alarming by their violence out of all proportion to their duration; and, supposing that I should succeed in pleasing you, we must end in the vulgarest way—marriage, housekeeping, and children! Oh, Bélise and Henriette Chrysale in one, can that be? So, farewell.'

IX.

To Monsieur de Canalis.

'My Friend,—Your letter gave me as much pain as pleasure. Perhaps we may soon find it all pleasure to

read each other's letters. Understand me. We speak to God, we ask of Him many things; He remains speechless. Now I want to have from you the answers God never gives us. Cannot such a friendship as that of Mademoiselle de Gournay and Montaigne be repeated? Have you not known the household of Sismonde de Sismondi, at Geneva, the most touching home-life ever seen, and of which I have been told—something like that of the Marchese and Marchesa di Pescara, happy even in their old age? Good heavens! is it impossible that there should be two harps, which, though at a distance, respond to each other as in a symphony, and vibrate so as to produce delicious harmony? Man alone, in all creation, is at once the harp, the musician, and the hearer.

'Do you see me fretting after the manner of ordinary women? Do not I know that you go into society and see the handsomest and cleverest women in Paris? Can I not imagine that one of those sirens might embrace you in her cold scales, and that it is she who has sent the answer that grieves me by its prosaic reflections? There is, my friend, something more beautiful than these flowers of Parisian blandishment; there is a flower that grows at the height of those Alpine peaks called men of genius; the pride of humanity, which they fructify by shedding on it the clouds they collect with their heads in the skies; that flower I intend to cultivate and to make it open, for its wild, sweet perfumes will never fail us; they are perennial.

'Do me the honour to believe that in me there is nothing common. If I had been Bettina—for I know to whom you allude—I would never have been Frau von Arnim; and if I had been one of Lord Byron's loves, I should at this moment be in a convent. You have touched me in a sensitive spot.

'You do not know me; you will know me. I feel in myself a sublime something which may be spoken of

without vanity. God has implanted in my soul the root of that hybrid plant I have mentioned as native to Alpine heights, and I will not stick it in a flower-pot at my window to see it perish. No, that gorgeous and unique blossom, full of intoxicating fragrance, shall not be dragged through the vulgarities of life; it is yours—yours without a glance having blighted it, yours for ever! Yes, dear one, yours are all my thoughts, even the most secret, the most mad; yours is the heart of a girl without reserve; yours an infinite affection. If I do not like you personally, I shall not marry.

'I can live the life of the heart, the life of your mind, of your feelings; they please me, and I shall always be, as I am now, your friend. There is beauty of nature in you, and that is enough for me. There lies my life. Do not disdain a pretty young handmaiden who, for her part, does not shrink from the idea of being some day the poet's old housekeeper, in some sort his housewife, in some sort his common-sense, in some sort his wealth. This devoted maid, so precious in your lives, is pure, disinterested Friendship, to whom everything is revealed; who listens sometimes with a shake of the head, and who sits late, spinning by the light of the lamp, to be at hand when the poet comes home, soaked by the rain or out of sorts. This is my destiny if I am never to be a happy and faithfully attached wife: I can smile on one as on the other.

'And do not suppose that France will be deeply aggrieved if Mademoiselle d'Este does not give her two or three children, or refuses even to be a Madame Vilquin, or the like? I, for my part, shall never be an old maid. I shall make myself a motherhood by beneficence, and by secretly sharing the existence of a great man, to whom I shall dedicate all my thoughts and all my earthly efforts. I have the utmost horror of the commonplace. If I should be free and rich—and I know I am young and handsome—I will never become the

property of some simpleton under the excuse of his being the son of a peer of France; nor of some good-looking man, who would be the woman of the two; nor of any man who would make me blush twenty times a day at the thought that I was his. Be quite easy on that score.

'My father adores my wishes too much ever to contravene them. If my poet likes me, if I like him, the glorious palace of our love will be built so high that it will be absolutely inaccessible to misfortune. I am an eaglet; you will see it in my eye. I will not repeat what I have already told you, but I put it into fewer words when I assure you that I shall be of all women the most glad to be as completely the captive of love, as I am at this moment of my father's will.

'Come, my friend, let us reduce to the truth of romance what has come upon us by my free-will.

'A girl of lively imagination shut up in a turret is dying to run about in a park which only her eyes can explore; she invents a way of opening her bars, she springs out of window, climbs the park wall, and goes off to sport at her neighbour's. It is the eternal comedy! . . . Well, that girl is my soul, the neighbouring park is your genius. Is it not most natural? Was a neighbour ever heard of who complained of his trellis being damaged by pretty feet?

'So much for the poet; but must the ultra-reasonable hero of Molière's comedies have reasons? Here are plenty. My dear Géronte, marriages are commonly made in direct opposition to common-sense. A family makes inquiries as to a young man. If this Léandre, provided by a friendly gossip, or picked up in a ballroom, has robbed no one, if he has no visible stain, if he has as much money as is expected, if he has come from college or has had a legal training, thus satisfying the usual ideas of education, he is allowed to call on a young lady, dressed to receive him from the moment when she gets

up, instructed by her mother to be careful of what she says, and enjoined to keep anything of her soul or heart from being read in her countenance by assuming a set smile, like a dancer finishing a pirouette; she is armed with the most positive instructions as to the perils of showing her true character, and advised not to appear too distressingly knowing. The parents, when all the points of interest are satisfactorily settled between them, are simple-minded enough to recommend the young people to know all they can of each other during the few moments when they are alone, when they talk together, when they walk out—without any kind of freedom, for they know that they are tied already. Under such conditions a man dresses his mind as carefully as his person, and the girl on her side does the same. This miserable farce, carried on with gifts of flowers and jewels and places at the play, is what is called courting a girl.

'This is what I rebel against, and I mean to make legal marriage the outcome of a long marriage of souls. In all a girl's life this is the only moment when she needs reflection, insight, and experience. Her liberty and happiness are at stake, and you place neither the dice nor the box in her hands; she bets on the game; she is but a looker-on. I have the right, the will, and the power to work out my own woe, and I will use them —as my mother did when, guided by instinct, she married the most generous, devoted, and loving of men, who bewitched her one evening by his beauty. I know you to be single, a poet, and handsome. You may be sure that I never should have chosen for my confidant one of your brethren in Apollo who was married. If my mother was attracted by a handsome face, which is perhaps the genius of form, why should not I be attracted by mind and form combined? Shall I know you better after studying you by correspondence than after beginning by the vulgar method of so many months of courting? "That is the question," saith Hamlet.

'My plan, my dear Chrysale, has at least the advantage of not compromising our persons. I know that love has its illusions, and every illusion has its morrow. Therein lies the reason why so many lovers part who believed themselves bound for life. The true test lies in suffering and in happiness. When, after standing this double test of life, two beings have shown all their faults and good qualities, and have learnt each other's characters, they may go to the tomb hand in hand; but, my dear Argante, who tells you that our little drama has no future before it? . . . And, at any rate, shall we not have had the pleasure of our correspondence?

'I await your commands, Monseigneur, and remain, with all my heart, yours obediently,

'O. d'Este-M.'

X.

To Mademoiselle O. d'Este-M.

'You are a demon! I love you. Is that what you want, extraordinary girl? Perhaps you only wish to divert your leisure in the country by looking on at the follies of which a poet is capable? That would be a very wicked thing. Your two letters betray just enough of mischief to suggest the doubt to a Parisian. But I am no longer master of myself; my life and future hang on the answer you may send me. Tell me whether the certain possession of an unbounded affection given to you, in defiance of social conventionalities, can touch you; if you will allow me to visit you. There will still be ample room for doubt and agony of mind in the question whether I shall be personally agreeable to you. If your answer is favourable, I alter my life, and bid adieu to many vexations which we are so foolish as to call happiness.

'Happiness, my dear, beautiful, unknown one, is what

you have dreamed it; a perfect fusion of feelings, an absolute harmony of souls, a keen sense of ideal beauty—so far as God vouchsafes it to us here below—stamped on the common actions of a life whose round we are bound to follow; above all constancy of heart, far more precious than what we call fidelity. Can anything be called a sacrifice when the end is the supremest good, the dream of poets and of maidens, the poem to which on entering life—as soon as the spirit tries its wings—every lofty mind looks up with longing, brooding eyes, only to see it dashed to pieces against a stumbling-stone as hard as it is vulgar; for almost every man sees the foot of reality set down at once on that mysterious egg which hardly ever hatches out?

'I will not as yet tell you of myself, of my past, of my character, nor of an affection—almost motherly on one side, and on mine almost filial—in which you have already wrought a change with results in my life that may explain the word sacrifice. You have made me forgetful, not to say ungrateful. Is that enough to satisfy you? Oh! speak! Say one word, and I shall love you till my eyes are closed in death, as Pescara loved his wife, as Romeo loved his Juliet, and faithfully. Our life—mine, at any rate—will be that untroubled happiness of which Dante speaks as being the atmosphere of his "Paradiso"—a poem infinitely superior to his "Inferno."

'Strange to say, it is not myself, but you, whom I doubt in the long meditations in which I have allowed myself—like you, perhaps—to follow the chimerical course of a dream-life. Yes, dear one, I feel in me the strength to love thus, to go on my way to the tomb gently, slowly, always smiling, arm in arm with the woman I love, without a cloud on the fair weather of my soul. Yes, I have courage enough to look forward to our old age together, to see us both with white hair, like the venerable historian of Italy, still inspired by the same affection, but changed by the spirit of each season.

'You see, I can no longer be no more than your friend. Though Chrysale, Oronte, and Argante, you say, have come to life again in me, I am not yet so senile as to drink of a cup held by the fair hands of a veiled woman without feeling a fierce desire to tear away the domino, the mask, and to see her face. Either write no more, or give me hope. I must have a glimpse of you, or throw up the game. Must I say farewell? Will you allow me to sign myself,

'Your Friend?'

XI.

To Monsieur de Canalis.

'What flattery! How quickly has grave Anselme turned into a dashing Léandre! To what am I to ascribe such a change? Is it to the black I have scribbled on white, to the ideas which are to the flowers of my soul what a rose drawn in black-lead pencil is to the roses of the garden? Or to the remembrance of the girl you took for me, who is to my real self what a waiting-maid is to her mistress? Have we exchanged parts? Am I reason, and are you folly?

'A truce to this nonsense. Your letter made me acquainted with intoxicating joys of soul, the first I have not owed to family feelings. What, a poet has asked, are the ties of blood which weigh so heavily on ordinary souls in comparison with those which Heaven forges for us of mysterious sympathies? Let me thank you—no, there are no thanks for such things. Blessings on you for the happiness you have given me; may you be happy with the gladness you poured into my soul.

'You have explained to me some apparent injustice in social life. There is something brilliant in glory, something masculine which becomes men alone, and God has prohibited women from wearing this halo, while giving

us love and tenderness with which to refresh the brows on which its awful light rests. I feel my mission, or rather, you have confirmed me in it.

'Sometimes, my friend, I have risen in the morning in a frame of inconceivable sweetness. A sort of peace, tender and divine, gave me a sense as of Heaven. My first thought was like a blessing. I used to call these mornings my German *levers*, to distinguish them from my southern sunsets, full of heroic deeds of battles, of Roman festivals, and of ardent verse. Well, after having read the letter into which you breathed a fever of impatience, I felt in my heart the lightness of one of those heavenly awakenings, when I loved air and nature, and felt myself destined to die for some one I loved. One of your poems, "Le Chant d'une jeune fille," describes these delicious hours when gladness is sweet, when prayer is a necessity, and it is my favourite piece. Shall I put all my flattery into one line : I think you worthy to be me !

'Your letter, though short, allowed me to read your heart. Yes, I could guess your tumultuous impulses, your excited curiosity, your plans, all the faggots carried (by whom) for the pyre of your heart. But I do not yet know enough of you to comply with your request. Understand, dear one, it is mystery which allows me the freedom that betrays the depths of my soul. When once we have met, farewell to our knowledge of each other.

'Shall we make a bargain ? Was the first we made a bad one for you ? You gained my esteem by it. And admiration supported by esteem is a great thing, my friend. First write me a sketch of your life in a few words ; then tell me about your life in Paris, day by day, without any disguise, as if you were chatting to an old friend : well, then, after that I will carry our friendship a step further. I will see you, my friend, that I promise you ; and it is a great deal.

'All this, dear, I warn you, is neither an intrigue nor an adventure; it cannot result in any kind of "affair" of gallantry, as you men say among yourselves. My life is involved in it, and moreover—a thing which sometimes causes me terrible remorse as to the thoughts I send flying to you in flocks—not less involved is the life of a father and mother I adore, whom I must satisfy in my choice, and who in my friend must find a son.

'How far can you lordly souls, to whom God has given the wings of angels, but not always their perfections, yield to the Family and its petty needs? A text I have pondered over already! Although before going forth to you I said in my heart, "Be bold!" it has not quaked the less on the road, and I have never deceived myself either as to the roughness of the way or the difficulties of the mountain I had to climb. I have followed it all out in long meditations. Do I not know that men as eminent as you are have known the love they have inspired quite as well as that they have felt; that they have had more than one romance; and that you, above all, while cherishing those thorough-bred chimeras which a woman will buy at any cost, have gone through more final than first chapters? And yet I could say to myself, "Be bold!" because I have studied the geography of the high peaks of Humanity that you accuse of coldness—studied them more than you think. Did you not say of Byron and Goethe that they were two colossal masses of egoism and poetry? Ah, my friend, you there fall into the error of superficial minds; but it was perhaps generosity on your part, false modesty, or the hope of evading me.

'The vulgar may be allowed, but you may not, to regard the results of hard work as a development of the individual. Neither Lord Byron, nor Goethe, nor Walter Scott, nor Cuvier, nor any inventor belongs to himself; they are all the slaves of an idea; and this mysterious power is more jealous than a woman, it

absorbs them, it makes them or kills them for its own advantage. The visible outcome of this concealed life resembles egoism in its effects; but how dare we say that a man who has sold himself for the delight, the instruction, or the greatness of his age, is an egoist? Is a mother accused of selfishness when she sacrifices everything for her child? Well, the detractors of genius do not discern its teeming maternity, that is all.

'The poet's life is so perpetual a sacrifice that he needs a gigantic organisation to enable him to enjoy the pleasures of an ordinary life. Hence, if, like Molière, he insists on living the life of feelings while giving them expression in their most acute crises, what disasters come upon him! for to me the comic side of Molière, as overlaying his private life, is really horrible. The magnanimity of genius seems to me almost divine, and I have classed you with that noble family of egoists so called. Oh! if I had found shallowness, self-interest, and ambition where, as it is, I admire all the flowers of the soul that I love best, you cannot know what slow suffering would have consumed me. I found disappointment sitting at the portal of my sixteenth year; what should I have done if at twenty I had found fame a liar, and the man, who in his writings had expressed so many of the sentiments buried in my heart, incapable of understanding that heart when disclosed to him alone?

'Do you know, my friend, what would have become of me? I am going to admit you to the very depths of my soul. Well, I should have said to my father, "Bring me any son-in-law to your mind; I give up all free-will; get me married to please yourself!"—and the man might have been a notary, a banker, avaricious, stupid, provincial, as tiresome as a rainy day, as vulgar as a parish voter; he might have been a manufacturer or some brave but brainless soldier—he would have found in me his most resigned and attentive slave. But then—dreadful suicide at every instant!—my soul would never have unfolded

in the life-giving beams of the sun it worships. Not a murmur should ever have revealed to my father, my mother, or my children the suicide of the being who is at this moment shaking its prison-bars, flashing lightnings from my eyes, flying to you on outspread pinions, perching like a Polyhymnia in the corner of your study, breathing its atmosphere, and gazing at everything with a mildly inquisitive eye. Sometimes in the fields, where my husband might have taken me, I should have escaped a little way from my babes, and, seeing a lovely morning, would secretly have shed a few very bitter tears. Finally, in my heart, and in the corner of a drawer, I should have stored a little comfort for every girl betrayed by love, poor poetical souls dragged into torments by a smiling face!

'But I believe in you, my friend. This faith purifies the most fantastic notions of my secret ambition, and sometimes—see how frank I can be—I long to be in the middle of the story we have just begun, so assured am I of my feelings, such strength for love do I feel in my heart, such constancy founded on reason, such heroism to fulfil the duty I am creating for myself in case love should ever turn to duty.

'If it were given to you to follow me to the splendid seclusion where I picture our happiness, if you could know my schemes, you might utter some terrible sentence about madness, and I should perhaps be cruelly punished for sending so much poetry to a poet. Yes, I want to be a living spring, to be as inexhaustible as a beautiful country during the twenty years which nature allows us to shine in. I will keep satiety at a distance by refinements and variety. I will be brave for my love as other women are for the world. I will vary happiness, lend wit to tenderness, and piquancy to faithfulness. I am ambitious; I will kill my past rivals, dispel superficial troubles by the sweetness, the proud self-devotion of a wife, and, for a whole lifetime, give such care to the nest

as a bird gives for only a few days. This immense dower ought, and could, only be offered to a great man before being dropped into the mire of vulgar conventionality.

'Now, do you still think my first letter a mistake? A gust of some mysterious will flung me towards you, as a tempest may carry a rose-bush to the heart of a stately willow. And in the letter I keep here—next my heart—you have exclaimed like your ancestor when he set out for the crusades, "It is God's will!"

'You will be saying, "How she chatters!" All those about me say, "Mademoiselle is very silent!"

'O. d'Este-M.'

These letters seemed very original to those persons to whose kindness the author of the *Comédie Humaine* is beholden for them; but their admiration for this duel between two minds crossing their pens, while their faces were hidden by the strictest incognito, may not be generally shared. Of a hundred spectators, eighty perhaps will be tired of this assault of arms. So the respect due to the majority—even to a possible majority—in every country enjoying a constitutional government, advises the suppression of eleven more letters exchanged by Ernest and Modeste during the month of September; if a flattering majority should clamour for them, let us hope that it may one day afford me the means of restoring them here.

Tempted on by a wit as audacious as the heart beneath seemed to be adorable, the poor private secretary's really heroic feelings gave themselves the rein in those letters, which each reader's imagination may conceive of as finer than they really are, when picturing this harmony of two unfettered souls. Ernest, indeed, lived only on these dear scraps of paper, as a miser lives on those sent forth by the bank; while in Modeste a deep attachment had grown up in the place of the pleasure of bringing

excitement into a life of celebrity, and being, in spite of distance, its chief element. Ernest's affection completed Canalis' glory. Alas! it often takes two men to make one perfect lover, just as in literature a type can only be produced by a compound of the peculiarities of several different characters. How often has a woman said in a drawing-room after some intimate talk: 'That man would be my ideal as to his soul, but I feel that I love that other who is no more than a fancy of my senses!'

The last letter written by Modeste, which here follows, gives us a glimpse of the *Isle of Pheasants*, whither the divagations of this correspondence was conducting our lovers.

XII.

To Monsieur de Canalis.

'Be at le Havre on Sunday; go into the church after the one o'clock service, walk round it two or three times, go out without speaking to any one, without asking anybody a question; wear a white rose in your button-hole. Then return to Paris, you will there find an answer. This answer will not be such as you expect, for I must tell you, the future is not yet in my hands. But should I not be really mad to say *yes* without having seen you? When I have seen you, I can say *no* without offence. I am sure to remain unrecognised.'

This was the letter Modeste had sent off the very day before that on which the futile struggle between herself and Dumay had taken place. So she was happy in looking forward with yearning impatience to Sunday, when her eyes would prove her intuitions, her heart, to be right or wrong—one of the most solemn moments in a woman's life, made, too, as romantic as the most

enthusiastic girl could desire by three months of communion soul to soul.

Everybody, excepting her mother, had taken this torpor of expectancy for the placidity of innocence. However stringent the laws of family life and religious bonds, there are still Julies d'Étanges and Clarissas—souls which, like a brimming cup, overflow under the divine touch. Was not Modeste splendid in the fierce energy she brought to bear on repressing her exuberant youth, and remaining concealed? Let us confess that the memory of her sister was more potent than any social limitations; she had sheathed her will in iron that she might not fail her father or her family. But what a turbulent upheaval! and how could a mother fail to perceive it?

On the following day Modeste and Madame Dumay led Madame Mignon out into the noonday sun to her bench among the flowers. The blind woman turned her pale withered face towards the ocean, inhaled the scent of the sea, and took Modeste's hand in her own, for the girl was sitting by her mother. Even as she was about to question her child, the mother hesitated between forgiveness and remonstrance, for she knew that this was love, and to her, as to the false Canalis, Modeste seemed exceptional.

'If only your father may be here in time! If he delays much longer, he will find you alone of those he loved! Promise me once more, Modeste, never to leave him,' she said, with motherly persuasiveness.

Modeste raised her mother's hands to her lips, and kissed them softly, as she replied—

'Need I tell you so again?'

'Ah, my child; you see, I myself left my father to go to my husband! And my father was alone too; I was his only child. . . . Is that what God is punishing me for, I wonder?—All I ask you is to marry in agreement with your father's choice, to keep a place for him

in your heart, not to sacrifice him to your happiness; to keep him in the bosom of your family. Before I lost my sight I made a note of my wishes; he will carry them out; I have enjoined on him to keep the whole of his fortune, not that I have a thought of distrusting you, but can one ever be sure about a son-in-law? I, my child, was I prudent? A flash of an eye settled my whole life. Beauty, the most deceitful of shows, spoke the truth to me; but if it should ever be the same with you, poor child, swear to me that if appearances should carry you away, as they did your mother, you would leave it to your father to make inquiries as to the character, the heart, and the previous life of the man of your choice, if you make a choice.'

'I will never marry without my father's consent,' replied Modeste.

On hearing this answer, her mother sat in complete silence, and her half-dead countenance showed that she was pondering on it, as blind people ponder, meditating on her daughter's tone in speaking it.

'You see, my child,' said Madame Mignon, after a long silence, 'the thing is this: If Caroline's wrong-doing is killing me by inches, your father would never survive yours; I know him; he would blow his brains out; there would be neither life nor happiness on earth for him . . .'

Modeste walked away a few steps, and returned in a minute.

'Why did you leave me?' asked Madame Mignon.

'You made me cry, mamma,' said Modeste.

'Well, my angel, kiss me then. You love no one here? You have no one paying attentions to you?'

'No, mamma,' said the little Jesuit.

'Can you swear to that?'

'Really, truly!' cried Modeste.

Madame Mignon said no more; she still doubted.

'In short, if you should choose a husband, your father would know all about it?'

'I promised that to my sister and to you, mother. What sin do you suppose I could commit when every minute I read on my finger, *Remember Bettina!*—Poor little sister!'

At the moment when the words, 'Poor little sister!' were followed by an interval of silence between Modeste and her mother, from whose darkened eyes fell tears which Modeste could not check even by falling at Madame Mignon's knees and crying, 'Forgive me; forgive me, mamma!'—at that very moment the worthy Dumay was mounting the hill of Ingouville at a rapid pace, an abnormal incident in the cashier's life.

Three letters had once brought them ruin; one had brought fortune back to them. That morning Dumay had received, by the hand of a captain just returned from the China seas, the first news he had had of his patron and only friend.

To Monsieur Dumay, formerly cashier to the firm of Mignon.

'My dear Dumay,—Barring misadventure by sea, I shall follow closely on the vessel by which I am forwarding this letter; I would not leave the ship to which I am accustomed. I told you, No news was to be good news; but the first words of this letter will rejoice you, for those words are, I have at least seven millions of francs! I am bringing a large part of it in indigo, a third in good bills on London and Paris, another third in bright gold. The money you sent me enabled me to make the sum I had determined on—two millions for each of the girls, and comfort for myself.

'I have been dealing wholesale in opium for the Canton houses, all ten times as rich as I am. You have

no notion in Europe of what the rich China merchants are. I travelled from Asia Minor, where I could buy opium cheap, to Canton, where I sold it in bulk to the firms that deal in it.

'My last voyage was to the Malay Archipelago, where I could buy indigo of the first quality with the proceeds of the opium trade. Perhaps I may find that I have five or six hundred thousand francs more, as I am valuing my indigo only at cost price.

'I have been quite well all the time; never an ailment. That is the reward of travelling for one's children! At the beginning of the second year I was able to purchase the *Mignon*, a nice brig of seven hundred tons burthen, built of teak, and lined with the same, and copper-bottomed; fitted throughout to suit my convenience. This, too, is worth something. The seafaring life, the constant change needed in my trading, and hard work, as being in a way my own captain on the high seas, have all kept me in excellent health.

'To speak of all this is to speak of my two girls and my dear wife! I hope that on hearing of my ruin the wretch who robbed me of my Bettina may have deserted her, and the wandering lamb have returned to the cottage. She, no doubt, will need a larger dower.

'My three women and my good Dumay—you have all four been constantly in my thoughts during these three years. Dumay, you are a rich man. Your share, besides my own fortune, amounts to five hundred and sixty thousand francs, which I am forwarding to you by a draft, payable to yourself only, by the firm of Mongenod, who are advised from New York. A few months more and I shall see you all again—well, I hope.

'Now, my dear Dumay, I write to you only, because I wish you to keep the secret of my fortune, and I leave it to you to prepare my dear ones for the joy of my return. I have had enough of trade, and I mean to leave le Havre.

'The choice of my sons-in-law is a very serious matter. It is my intention to repurchase the estate and château of la Bastie, to endow it with an entailed settlement of a hundred thousand francs a year at least, and to petition the King to confer my name and titles on one of my sons-in-law. You, my dear Dumay, know the misfortune that befell us in consequence of the fatal splendour given by wealth. By that I wrecked the honour of one of my daughters. I carried back to Java the most wretched of fathers—an unhappy Dutch merchant with nine millions of francs, whose two daughters had been both carried off by villains! We wept together like two children. So I will not have the amount of my fortune known.

'I shall not land at le Havre, but at Marseilles. My mate is a Provençal, an old retainer of my family, whom I have enabled to make a little fortune. Castagnould will have my instructions to repurchase la Bastie, and I shall dispose of my indigo through the firm of Mongenod. I shall place my money in the Bank of France, and come home to you, professing to have made no more than about a million of francs in merchandise. My daughters will be reputed to have two hundred thousand francs a piece. Then my great business will be to decide which of my sons-in-law may be worthy to succeed to my name, my arms, and my titles, and to live with us; but they must both be, as you and I are, absolutely steady, firm, loyal, and honest men.

'I have never doubted you, old boy, for a single instant. I have felt sure that my dear and admirable wife, with yours and yourself, will have drawn an impassable fence round my daughter, and that I may press a kiss full of hope on the pure brow of the angel that remains to me. Bettina-Caroline, if you have been able to screen her fault, will have a fortune. After trying war and trade, we will now go in for agriculture, and you must be our steward. Will that suit you?

'And so, old friend, you are master of your line of conduct to the family, to tell them, or to say nothing of my success. I trust to your judgment; you are to say just what you think right. In four years there may have been many changes of character. I make you the judge; I so greatly fear my wife's tender weakness with her daughters.

'Farewell, my dear old Dumay. Tell my wife and daughters that I have never failed to embrace them in my heart every day, morning and evening. The second draft, for forty thousand francs, payable, like the other, to you alone, is for my wife and daughters to go on with.

'Your master and friend,

'CHARLES MIGNON.'

'Your father is coming home,' said Madame Mignon to her daughter.

'What makes you think that, mamma?' asked Modeste.

'Nothing could make Dumay run but having that news to bring us.'

Modeste, lost in her own thoughts, had not seen nor heard Dumay.

'Victory!' shouted the Lieutenant from the gate. 'Madame, the Colonel has never been ill, and he is coming home. . . . He is coming on the *Mignon*, a good ship of his own, which, with the cargo he describes to me, must be worth eight or nine hundred thousand francs. But he urgently begs you will say nothing about it; the disaster to our poor lost child has eaten deeply into his heart.'

'He has made room in it for a grave then,' said Madame Mignon.

'And he ascribes this disaster—as seems to me most probable—to the greed which a large fortune excites in young men. My poor Colonel hopes to find the lost

lamb among us here.—Let us rejoice among ourselves, and say nothing to anybody, not even to Latournelle if possible.—Mademoiselle,' he added to Modeste apart, 'write a letter to your father to tell him of the loss in the family and its terrible consequences, so as to prepare him for the dreadful sight that awaits him; I will undertake that he shall get the letter before arriving at le Havre, for he will be obliged to come through Paris; write fully, you have plenty of time; I will take the letter on Monday; on Monday, no doubt, I shall have to go to Paris——'

Modeste was now afraid lest Dumay and Canalis should meet; she was eager to go up to her room and write to put off the assignation.

'Tell me, Mademoiselle,' Dumay went on in the humblest tone, but standing in her path, 'that your father will find his daughter without a feeling in her heart but that which was in it when he left—of love for her mother.'

'I have sworn to my sister and my mother—I have sworn to myself to be my father's comfort, his joy, and his pride, and—I—will be,' replied Modeste, with a haughty and scornful glance at Dumay. 'Do not mar my joy at knowing that my father will soon be amongst us again by any offensive suspicions. A young girl's heart cannot be hindered from beating; you do not wish me to be a mummy? I belong to my family; but my heart is my own. If I love any one, my father and mother shall be told of it. Are you satisfied, Monsieur?'

'Thank you, Mademoiselle,' replied Dumay. 'You have restored me to life. But you might at least have called me Dumay, even when giving me a slap in the face!'

'Swear to me,' said her mother, 'that you have never exchanged a word or a glance with any young man.'

'I can swear it,' said Modeste, smiling, and looking at Dumay, who was studying her with a mischievous smile like a girl's playing off some joke.

'Can she really be so false!' exclaimed Dumay, when Modeste had gone into the house.

'My daughter Modeste may have her faults,' said the mother, 'but she is incapable of a lie.'

'Well, then, let us make ourselves easy,' replied the lieutenant, 'and be satisfied that misfortune has closed its account with us.'

'God grant it!' said Madame Mignon. 'You will see him, Dumay; I can only hear him. . . . There is much sadness in my joy.'

Modeste, meanwhile, though happy in the thought of her father's return, was, like Pierrette, distressed to see all her eggs broken. She had hoped for a larger fortune than Dumay had spoken of. She was ambitious for her poet, and wished for at least half of the six millions of which she had written in her second letter. Thus absorbed by her double happiness, and annoyed by the grievance of her comparative poverty, she sat down to her piano, the confidant of so many girls, who tell it their anger, and their wishes, expressing them in their way of playing.

Dumay was talking to his wife, walking to and fro below her window, confiding to her the secret of their good fortune, and questioning her as to her hopes, wishes, and intentions. Madame Dumay, like her husband, had no family but the Mignon family. The husband and wife decided on living in Provence, if the Count should go to Provence, and to leave their money to any child of Modeste's that might need it.

'Listen to Modeste,' said Madame Mignon to them; 'only a girl in love could compose such a melody without any knowledge of music.'

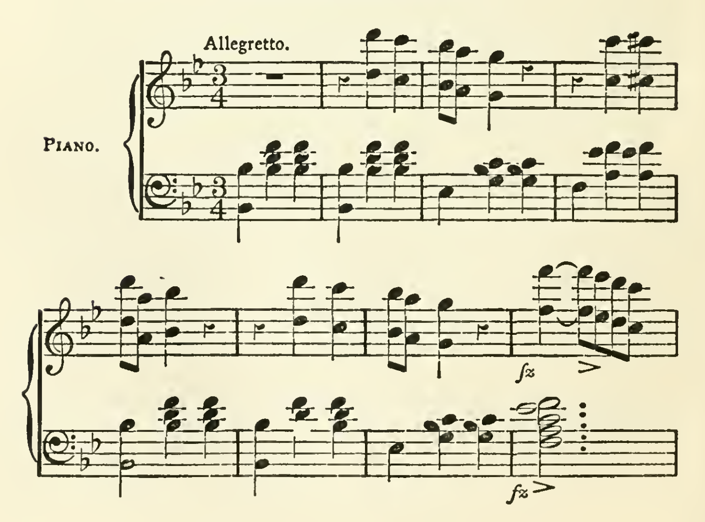
Homes may burn, fortunes may collapse, fathers may

come back from their travels, Empires may fall, cholera may ravage the town—a girl's love pursues its flight as nature keeps her course, or that horrible acid discovered by chemistry which might pierce through the earth if it were not absorbed in the centre.

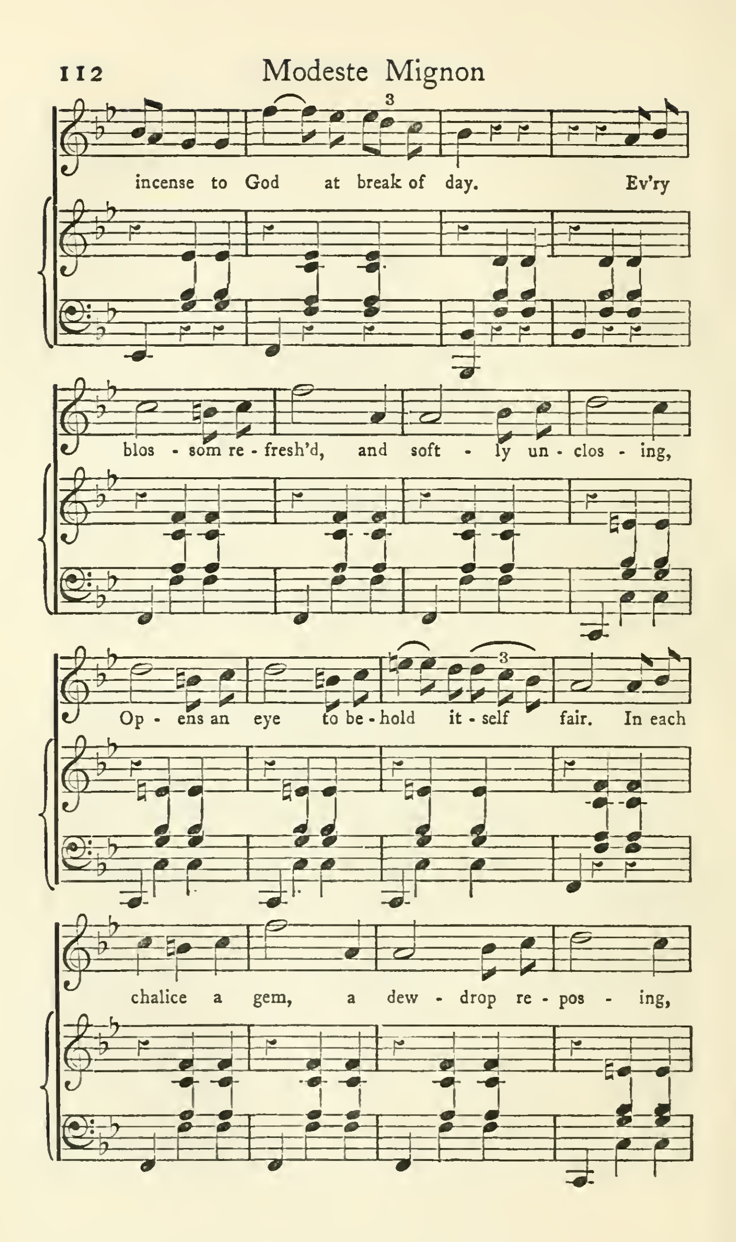
This is the ballad Modeste had improvised to some verses which must be quoted here, though they are to be found in the second volume of poems published by Dauriat; for, to adapt them to the air, the young composer had broken the rhythm by some changes which might puzzle the admirers of a poet who is sometimes too precise.

And here, too, since modern typography allows of it, is Modeste's music, to which her exquisite expression lent the charm we admire in the greatest singers—a charm that no printing, were it phonetic or hieroglyphic, could ever represent.

A MAIDEN'S SONG.




Come a -
wake, my heart, for the soaring lark Wings her
upward flight as she chants her lay. Sleep no
more, my heart, for the vi - o - let Breathes her


3
incense to God at break of day. Ev'ry
blos - som re - fresh'd, and soft - ly un - clos - ing,
3
Op - ens an eye to be - hold it - self fair. In each
chalice a gem, a dew - drop re - pos - ing,


Mir - rors its hues Ere it dies in the air. We
feel in the breeze that the an-gel of flowers Has
kiss'd ev' - ry rose as he pass'd in the night, Has
guarded their beauty through all the dark hours, Their


first smile is his in the sweet morning light.
Then a - wake, my heart, for the soaring lark
Wings her ear-ly flight, and chants her lay.
3
Night and sleep be-gone! my heart, the vi - o - let


To God her in-cense breathes at break of day.
Night and sleep begone! my heart, the vi - o - let To
God her in - cense breathes at break of day.



'It is pretty,' said Madame Dumay. 'Modeste is very musical; that is all.'

'She has the very devil in her!' exclaimed the cashier, for the mother's dread had entered into his soul and made his blood run cold.

'She is in love,' said Madame Mignon.

By her success in communicating her conviction as to Modeste's secret passion, on the irrefragable evidence of that melody, Madame Mignon chilled the cashier's joy over his patron's return and success. The worthy Breton went off to the town to do his day's business at Gobenheim's; then, before going home to dinner, he called on the Latournelles to mention his fears, and once more to request their help and co-operation.

'Yes, my good friend,' said Dumay on the threshold, as he took leave of the notary, 'I am of Madame's opinion. She is in love, sure enough; beyond that the devil only knows! . . . I am disgraced!'

'Do not worry yourself, Dumay,' said the little notary. 'We certainly, among us all, must be a match for that little lady. Sooner or later every girl who is in love does something rash which betrays her secret; we will talk it over this evening.'

So all these persons, devoted to the Mignon family, were still a prey to the same anxiety as had tormented them before the experiment that the old soldier had expected to be decisive. The futility of all these

struggles so spurred Dumay's conscience that he would not go to Paris to fetch his fortune before he had discovered the clue to this enigma. All these hearts, caring far more for sentiment than for self-interest, understood that unless he found this daughter innocently pure, the Colonel might die of grief on finding Bettina dead and his wife blind. The unhappy Dumay's despair made so deep an impression on the Latournelles, that they forgot their loss of Exupère, whom they had sent off to Paris that morning. During the dinner hour, when the three were alone, Monsieur and Madame Latournelle and Butscha turned the matter over under every aspect, and considered every conceivable hypothesis.

'If Modeste were in love with any one at le Havre, she would have quaked last night,' said Madame Latournelle, 'so her lover must be elsewhere.'

'She swore this morning to her mother, in Dumay's presence, that she had not exchanged a glance or a word with a living soul,' said the notary.

'Then she loves as I do!' said Butscha.

'And how do you love, my poor boy?' asked Madame Latournelle.

'Madame,' replied the little hunchback, 'I love all to myself, from afar, almost as far as from hence to the stars.'

'And how do you get there, you great goose?' said Madame Latournelle, smiling at him.

'Ah, Madame, what you take to be a hump is the sheath for my wings.'

'Then this explains your seal!' exclaimed the lawyer.

The clerk's seal was a star, with the motto, *Fulgens, sequar*—Shine, and I will follow you—the device of the house of Chastillonest.

'A beautiful creature may be as diffident as the most hideous,' said Butscha, as if talking to himself. 'Modeste is quite clever enough to have feared lest she should be loved only for her beauty.'

Hunchbacks are wonderful creatures, and due entirely

to civilisation; for, in the scheme of nature, weak or deformed beings ought to perish. A curvature or twist of the spinal column gives to these men, who seem to be Nature's outcasts, a flashing look, in which is concentrated a greater quantity of nervous fluids than other men can command, in the very centre where they are elaborated and act, and whence they are sent forth like a light to vivify their inmost being. Certain forces are the result, detected occasionally by magnetism, but most frequently lost in the waste places of the spiritual world. Try to find a hunchback who is not gifted in some remarkable way, either with a cheerful wit, superlative malignity, or sublime kindliness. These beings, privileged beings though they know it not, live within themselves as Butscha did, when they have not exhausted their splendidly concentrated powers in the battle they have fought to conquer obstacles and remain alive.

In this way we may explain the superstitious and popular traditions, which we owe to the belief in gnomes, in frightful dwarfs, in misshapen fairies—the whole race of bottles, as Rabelais has it, that contain rare balsams and elixirs.

Thus Butscha almost read Modeste; and with the eagerness of a hopeless lover, of a slave ever ready to die like the soldiers who, deserted and alone amid Russian snows, still shouted '*Vive l'Empereur!*' he dreamed of discovering her secret for himself alone.

As his chief and Madame Latournelle walked up to the Chalet, he followed them with a very anxious mien, for it was imperative that he should conceal from every watchful eye, from every listening ear, the snare in which he meant to entrap the girl. There should be a flashing glance, a start detected, as when a surgeon lays his finger on a hidden injury.

That evening Gobenheim did not join them; Butscha was Monsieur Dumay's partner against Monsieur and

Madame Latournelle. At about nine o'clock, while Modeste was absent preparing her mother's room, Madame Mignon and her friends could talk openly; but the poor clerk, stricken by the conviction which had come on him too, seemed as far away from the discussion as Gobenheim had been the night before.

'Why, Butscha, what ails you?' exclaimed Madame Latournelle, astonished at him. 'One might think you had lost all your relations!'

A tear started to the poor fellow's eye—a foundling, deserted by a Swedish sailor, and his mother dead of grief in the workhouse!

'I have no one in the world but you,' he replied in husky tones; 'and your compassion is too pious ever to be withdrawn from me, for I will never cease to deserve your kindness.'

The answer struck an equally sensitive chord in those present, that of delicacy.

'We all love you, Monsieur Butscha,' said Madame Mignon with emotion.

'I have six hundred thousand francs of my own!' cried the worthy Dumay. 'You shall be a notary at le Havre, and Latournelle's successor.'

The American, for her part, had taken the poor hunchback's hand and pressed it.

'You have six hundred thousand francs!' cried Latournelle, pricking up his ears at this speech, 'and you let these ladies stay here! And Modeste has no horse! And she no longer has lessons in music, in painting, in——'

'Oh, he has only had the money a few hours,' exclaimed the American wife.

'Hush!' said Madame Mignon. While this was going on, the dignified Madame Latournelle had recovered herself. She turned to Butscha.

'My dear boy,' said she, 'you have so much affection around you, that I never considered the particular bear-

ing of a common phrase as applied to you; but you may thank me for my blunder, since it has shown you what friends you have earned by your beautiful nature.'

'Then you have some news of Monsieur Mignon?' asked the notary.

'He is coming home,' said Madame Mignon; 'but we must keep it secret.—When my husband hears how Butscha has clung to us, and that he has shown us the warmest and most disinterested friendship when the world turned its back on us, he will not leave you to provide for him entirely, Dumay. And so, my friend,' she added, trying to turn towards Butscha, 'you may proceed at once to deal with Latournelle——'

'He is of full age, five-and-twenty,' said Latournelle. 'And, on my part, it is paying off a debt, my dear fellow, if I give you the refusal of my practice.'

Butscha kissed Madame Mignon's hand, wetting it with his tears, and showed a tearful face when Modeste opened the drawing-room door.

'Who has been distressing my mysterious dwarf?' she asked.

'Oh, Mademoiselle, do we children nursed in sorrow ever shed tears of grief? I have just received such marks of attachment, that I was moved with tenderness for all those in whom I liked to believe I had found relations. I am to be a notary; I may grow rich. Ah, ha! Poor Butscha may some day be rich Butscha. You do not know what audacity exists in this abortion!' he exclaimed.

The hunchback struck himself hard on his cavernous breast, and placed himself in front of the fireplace after giving Modeste a look that stole like a gleam from under his heavy, drooping eyelids; for in this unforeseen conjuncture he had found his chance of sounding his sovereign lady's heart.

For an instant Dumay fancied that the clerk had dared aspire to Modeste; he exchanged looks with his friends

which were understood by all, and which made them gaze at the little hunchback with a sort of dread mingled with curiosity.

'I—I too—have my dreams,' Butscha went on, not taking his eyes off Modeste.

The girl looked down instinctively, in a way which was a revelation to the clerk. 'You love romances; allow me, in the midst of my joy, to confide my secret to you, and you will tell me if the end of the romance I have dreamed of for my life is possible. . . . If not, of what use is fortune. To me, more than to any one else, money is happiness, since to me happiness means the enriching of the one I love! You who know so many things, Mademoiselle, tell me whether a man can be loved independently of his person—handsome or ugly, and for his soul alone.'

Modeste looked up at Butscha. It was a terrible, questioning look, for at this moment Modeste shared Dumay's suspicions. 'When I am rich, I shall look out for some poor but beautiful girl, a foundling like myself, who has suffered much, and is very unhappy; I will write to her, comfort her, be her good genius; she shall read my heart, my soul; she shall have all my wealth, in both kinds—my gold, offered with great delicacy, and my mind, beautified by all the graces which the misfortune of birth has denied to my grotesque form! And I will remain hidden, like a cause which science seeks. God perhaps is not beautiful.—The girl will naturally be curious and want to see me; but I shall tell her that I am a monster of ugliness, I will describe myself as hideous——'

At this, Modeste looked hard in his face. If she had said, 'What do you know of my love affairs?' it could not have been more explicit.

'If I am so happy as to be loved for the poetry of my soul!—if, some day, I might seem to that woman to be only slightly deformed, confess that I shall be happier

than the handsomest of men, than even a man of genius beloved by such a heavenly creature as you are——'

The blush that mounted to Modeste's face betrayed almost the whole of the girl's secret to the hunchback.

'Well, now, if a man can enrich the girl he loves, and charm her heart irrespective of his person, is that the way to be loved?—This has been the poor hunchback's dream—yesterday's dream; for to-day your adorable mother has given me the clue to my future treasure by promising to facilitate my acquiring an office and connection. Still, before becoming a Gobenheim, I must know whether such a horrible transformation will achieve its end. What do you think, Mademoiselle, on your part?'

Modeste was so taken by surprise, that she did not observe Butscha's appeal to her judgment. The lover's snare was better contrived than the soldier's; for the poor girl, quite bewildered, stood speechless.

'Poor Butscha!' said Madame Latournelle to her husband, 'is he going mad?'

'You want to play the fairy tale of Beauty and the Beast,' said Modeste at last, 'and you forget that the Beast is turned into Prince Charming.'

'Do you think so?' said the dwarf. 'Now I have always imagined that transformation to symbolise the phenomenon of the soul becoming visible and eclipsing the body by its radiant glory. If I should never be loved, I shall remain invisible, that is all!—You and yours, Madame,' said he to his mistress, 'instead of having a dwarf at your command, will have a life and fortune.'

Butscha returned to his seat, and said to the three players, affecting perfect calmness—

'Who deals?'

But to himself he was saying with grief, 'She wants to be loved for her own sake; she is corresponding with some sham great man, and how far has she gone?'

'My dear mamma, it has struck a quarter to ten,' said Modeste to her mother.

Madame Mignon bid her friends good-night, and went to bed.

Those who insist on loving in secret may be watched over by Pyrenean dogs, mothers, Dumays, Latournelles —they are in no danger from these; but a lover! It is diamond cut diamond, fire against fire, wit against wit, a perfect equation, of which the terms are equal and interchangeable.

On Sunday morning Butscha was beforehand with Madame Latournelle, who always went to escort Modeste to mass, and stayed cruising about outside the Chalet, waiting for the postman.

'Have you a letter for Mademoiselle Modeste this morning?' he asked of that humble functionary as he approached.

'No, Monsieur, no——'

'We have been good customers of the Government for some time past!' exclaimed the clerk.

'I believe you!' replied the postman.

Modeste from her room saw and heard this little interview; she posted herself at her window at this hour, behind the Venetian shutter, to watch for the postman.

She went down and out into the little garden, where, in a husky voice, she called out, 'Monsieur Butscha.'

'Here am I, Mademoiselle,' said the hunchback, coming to the little gate, which Modeste herself opened.

'Will you tell me whether you include among your titles to the affection of a woman the disgraceful espionage you choose to exercise?' asked the girl, trying to overwhelm her slave by her gaze and queenly attitude.

'Yes, Mademoiselle,'' he proudly replied. 'I had never imagined,' he added in a low voice, 'that a worm could do good service to a star! But so it is. Would you rather have your heart read by your mother, Monsieur Dumay, and Madame Latournelle, than by a

poor creature, almost an outcast from life, who is yours as much as one of the flowers you cut to gratify you for a moment? They all know that you love; I alone know how. Take me as you would take a watch-dog; I will obey you, I will protect you, I will never bark, and I will have no opinions about you. All I ask is that you will let me be of some use to you. Your father placed a Dumay in your menagerie; try a Butscha, and you will find it quite another story! A poor Butscha, who asks for nothing, not even for a bone.'

'Well, I will take you on trial,' said Modeste, who only wished to be rid of so sharp a guardian. 'Go at once to all the hotels at Graville and le Havre, and ask if a M. Arthur has arrived from England——'

'Listen, Mademoiselle,' said Butscha respectfully, but interrupting Modeste, 'I will just go for a walk on the beach, and that will be all that is necessary, for you do not wish me to go to church, that is all.'

Modeste looked at the hunchback in blank astonishment.

'Yes, Mademoiselle, though you have wrapped your face in wadding and a handkerchief, you have no cold; though you have a double veil to your hat, it is only to see without being seen.'

'What endows you with so much penetration?' cried Modeste, reddening.

'Why, Mademoiselle, you have no stays on! A cold would not require you to disguise your figure by putting on several petticoats, to hide your hands in old gloves, and your pretty feet in hideous boots, to dress yourself anyhow, to——'

'That will do,' said she. 'But, now, how am I sure that you will obey me?'

'My master wanted to go to Sainte-Adresse, and was rather put out; but as he is really very kind, he would not deprive me of my Sunday. Well, I will propose to him that we should go——'

'Go then, and I shall trust to you——'

'Are you sure you will not want me at le Havre?'

'Quite.—Listen, mysterious dwarf, and look up,' she said, pointing to a cloudless sky. 'Can you see the track left by the bird that flew across just now? Well, my actions, as pure as that pure air, leave no more trace than that. Reassure Dumay and the Latournelles, reassure my mother; and be sure that this hand' (and she held out to him a slender little hand with upturned finger-tips, transparent to the light) 'will never be given away, never even warmed by the kiss of what is called a lover, before my father's return.'

'And why do you want me to keep away from church to-day?'

'Do you cross-question me, after all I have done you the honour to tell you and require of you?'

Butscha bowed without replying, and hastened home, enraptured at thus entering the service of his anonymous mistress.

An hour later Monsieur and Madame Latournelle came to fetch Modeste, who complained of a dreadful toothache.

'I really had not strength to dress,' said she.

'Well, then, stay at home,' said the notary's wife.

'No, no. I will go and pray for my father's safe return,' replied Modeste; 'and I thought that if I wrapped up well, it would do me more good than harm to go out.'

So Mademoiselle Mignon set out alone with Latournelle. She would not take his arm for fear of being questioned as to the internal tremor that agitated her at the idea of so soon seeing her great poet. One look, the first, was about to decide her future existence.

Is there in the life of man a more exquisite moment than that of the first promised meeting? Can the feelings that lie buried in his heart, and that then burst

into life, ever be known again? Can he ever again feel the pleasure that he finds, as did Ernest de la Brière, in choosing his best razors, his finest shirts, spotless collars, and impeccable clothes? We deify everything that is associated with that supreme hour. We imagine poems in our hearts, secret poems as beautiful as the woman's, and on the day when each reads the other's soul all is over! Is it not the same with these things as with the blossom of those wild fruits, at once sharp and sweet, lost in forest depths, the delight of the sun, no doubt; or, as Canalis says in 'The Maiden's Song,' the gladness of the plant itself which the Angel of Flowers has allowed to see its own beauty.

This leads to the reflection that La Brière, a modest soul, like many another penurious being for whom life begins with toil and money difficulties, had never yet been loved. He had arrived at le Havre the night before, and had at once gone to bed, like a coquette, to efface every trace of his journey; and he had now, after taking a bath, just completed a carefully advantageous toilet. This, perhaps, is the place for giving a full-length portrait of him, if only to justify the last letter Modeste was ever to write to him.

Born of a good family at Toulouse, distantly connected with that Minister who took him under his patronage, Ernest has the well-bred air which comes of an education begun from the cradle; the habit of business has given it solidity without effort, for pedantry is the rock on which precocious gravity is commonly wrecked. Of medium height, his face is attractively refined and gentle; his complexion warm, though colourless, was at that time set off by a slender moustache and a small imperial, a *virgule à la Mazarin*. But for these manly witnesses, he would, perhaps, have looked too much like a girl dressed up, so delicate is the cut of his face and lips, so natural is it to attribute to a woman teeth of transparent enamel and almost artificial evenness. Add to these

feminine characteristics a voice as sweet as his looks, as gentle as his turquoise blue eyes, with Oriental lids, and you will perfectly understand how it was that the Minister had nicknamed his young private secretary Mademoiselle de la Brière. His broad, smooth forehead, framed under thick black hair, has a dreamy look that does not contradict the expression of his countenance, which is wholly melancholy. The prominence of the eyebrows, though delicately arched, overshadows the eyes, and adds to this look of melancholy by the sadness—a physical sadness, so to speak—that the eyelids give when they half close the eyes. This secret bashfulness, to which we give the name of modesty, characterises his features and person. The whole result will, perhaps, be better understood if we add that the theory of perfect drawing demands greater length in the shape of the head, more space between the chin, which ends abruptly, and the forehead, on which the hair grows too low. Thus the face looks flattened. Work had already graven a furrow between the eyebrows, which were thick, and too nearly met, like those of all jealous natures. Though La Brière was as yet slight, his figure was one of those which, developing late, are unexpectedly stout at the age of thirty.

The young man might very well have typified, to those who are familiar with French history, the royal and mysterious personality of Louis XIII., with his melancholy diffidence for no known reason, pallid under his crown, loving the fatigue of hunting, and hating work; so timid with his mistress as to respect her virtue, so indifferent to his friend as to leave him to be beheaded; explicable only by his remorse at having avenged his father on his mother—either a Catholic Hamlet or the victim of some incurable malady. But the canker-worm which paled the King's cheek and unnerved his strength, was as yet, in Ernest, no more than simple distrust of himself, the shyness of a man to whom no woman had ever

said, 'How I love you!' and, above all, wasted self-sacrifice. After hearing the knell of a monarchy in the fall of a minister, the poor boy had found in Canalis a rock hidden under tempting mosses; he was seeking a despotism to worship; and this uneasiness, that of a dog in search of a master, gave him the expression of the king who found his. These clouds and feelings, this 'pale cast' over his whole person, made his face far more attractive than the young secretary himself imagined, annoyed as he was sometimes to find himself classed by women as a *beau ténébreux*—gloomily handsome; a style gone quite out of fashion at a time when every man would gladly keep the clarions of advertisement for his own exclusive use.

So Ernest the diffident had sought the adornment of the most fashionable clothes. For this interview, when everything would depend on first sight, he donned black trousers and carefully polished boots, a sulphur-coloured waistcoat, revealing an excessively fine shirt fastened with opal studs, a black necktie, and a short blue coat, which looked as if it had been glued to his back and waist by some new process; his rosette graced the button-hole. He wore smart kid gloves of the colour of Florentine bronze, and held in his left hand a light cane and his hat, with a certain Louis-quatorze air; thus showing, as the sacred place demanded, his carefully combed hair, on which the light shed satin-like reflections. Standing sentry under the porch from the very beginning of the service, he studied the church while watching all the Christians, more especially those in petticoats, who came to dip their fingers in the holy water.

As Modeste came in, an inner voice cried out, ''Tis he!' That coat and figure, so essentially Parisian, the rosette, the gloves, the walking-stick, the scented hair—none of these things were native to le Havre. And when La Brière turned to look at the notary's tall and showy wife, the little notary himself and the bundle—a

word dedicated to this sense by women—under which Modeste had concealed herself, though she was fully prepared, the poor child was stricken to the heart by the aspect of this romantic countenance, in the bright daylight from the open door. She could not be mistaken ; a small white rose almost hid the rosette. Would Ernest recognise his unknown fair hidden under an old hat and a double veil ? Modeste was so fearful of the clairvoyance of love that she walked with an elderly shuffle.

'Wife,' said Latournelle, as he went to his place, 'that man does not belong to le Havre.'

'So many strangers come through,' replied the lady.

'But do strangers ever think of coming to see our church, which is not more than two centuries old ? '

Ernest remained in the porch all through the service without seeing any woman who realised his hopes. Modeste, on her part, could not control her trembling till near the end. She was agitated by joys which she alone could have described. At last she heard on the pavement the step of a gentleman, for, Mass being over, Ernest was walking round the church, where no one remained but the *dilettanti* of prayer, who became to him the object of anxious and piercing scrutiny. He remarked the excessive trembling of the prayer-book held by the veiled lady as he passed her ; and as she was the only one who hid her face, he conceived some suspicions, confirmed by Modeste's dress, which he studied with the care of an inquisitive lover.

When Madame Latournelle left the church, he followed her at a decent distance, and saw her, with Modeste, go into the house in the Rue Royale, where Mademoiselle Mignon usually waited till the hour of vespers. Ernest studied the house, decorated with escutcheons, and asked of a passer-by the name of the owner, who was mentioned almost with pride as Monsieur Latournelle, the first notary of le Havre.

As he lounged down the Rue Royale, trying to catch

a glimpse of the interior of the house, Modeste could see her lover ; she then declared herself to be too ill to attend vespers, and Madame Latournelle kept her company. So poor Ernest had his cruise for his pains. He dared not go to loiter about Ingouville ; he made it a point of honour to obey, and returned to Paris after writing a letter while waiting for the coach, and posting it for Françoise Cochet to receive next morning with the postmark of le Havre.

Monsieur and Madame Latournelle dined at the Chalet every Sunday, taking Modeste home after vespers. As soon as the young lady felt better, they all went up to Ingouville, followed by Butscha. Modeste, quite happy, now dressed herself beautifully. As she went down to dinner she forgot all about her disguise of the morning and her cold, and sang—

'Night and sleep begone ! My heart, the violet
To God her incense breathes at break of day !'

Butscha felt a thrill as he beheld Modeste, she seemed to him so completely changed ; for the wings of love fluttered, as it were, on her shoulders, she looked like a sylph, and her cheeks glowed with the divine hue of happiness.

'Whose words are those which you have set to such a pretty air ?' Madame Mignon asked her daughter.

'They are by Canalis, mamma,' she replied, turning in an instant to the finest crimson, from her neck to the roots of her hair.

'Canalis !' exclaimed the dwarf, who learnt from Modeste's tone and blush all of her secret that he as yet knew not. 'He, the great poet, does he write ballads ?'

'They are some simple lines,' replied she, 'to which I have ventured to adapt some reminiscences of German airs.'

'No, no, my child,' said Madame Mignon ; 'that music is your own, my dear !'

Modeste, feeling herself grow hotter and hotter, went out into the garden, taking Butscha with her.

'You can do me a great service,' said she, in an undertone. 'Dumay is affecting discretion to my mother and me as to the amount of the fortune my father is bringing home, and I want to know the truth. Has not Dumay, at different times, sent papa five hundred and something thousand francs? My father is not the man to stay abroad four years simply to double his capital. Now a ship is coming in that is all his own, and the share he offers Dumay amounts to nearly six hundred thousand francs.'

'We need not question Dumay,' said Butscha. 'Your father had lost, as you know, four millions of francs before his departure, these he has no doubt recovered; he would certainly have given Dumay ten per cent. of his profits; so, from the fortune the worthy Breton confesses to, my chief and I calculate that the Colonel's must amount to six or seven millions——'

'Oh, father!' cried Modeste, crossing her arms, and raising her eyes to heaven, 'you have given me a second life!'

'Oh, Mademoiselle, you love a poet! A man of that stamp is more or less of a Narcissus. Will he love you as he ought? A craftsman in words, always absorbed in fitting sentences together, is very fatiguing. A poet, Mademoiselle, is not poetry—no more than the seed is the flower.'

'Butscha, I never saw such a handsome man!'

'Beauty, Mademoiselle, is a veil which often serves to hide many imperfections.'

'He has the most angelic heart that heaven——'

'God grant you may be right,' said the dwarf, clasping his hands. 'May you be happy! That man, like yourself, will have a slave in Jean Butscha. I shall then no longer be a notary; I shall give myself up to study—to science——'

'And why?'

'Well, Mademoiselle, to bring up your children, if you will condescend to allow me to be their tutor. . . . Oh! if you would accept a piece of advice! Look here, let me go to work my own way. I could ferret out this man's life and habits, could discover if he is kind, if he is violent or gentle, if he will show you the respect you deserve, if he is capable of loving you perfectly, preferring you to all else, even to his own talent——'

'What can it matter if I love him?' said she simply.

'To be sure, that is true,' cried the hunchback.

At this moment Madame Mignon was saying to her friends—

'My daughter has this day seen the man she loves.'

'Can it be that sulphur-coloured waistcoat that puzzled you so much, Latournelle?' cried the notary's wife. 'That young man had a pretty white rosebud in his button-hole——'

'Ah!' said the mother, 'a token to be known by!'

'He wore the rosette of the Legion of Honour,' Madame Latournelle went on. 'He is a charming youth! But we are all wrong; Modeste never raised her veil, she was huddled up like a pauper, and——'

'And she said she was ill,' added the notary. 'But she has thrown off her mufflers, and is perfectly well now!'

'It is incomprehensible!' said Dumay.

'Alas! it is as clear as day,' said the notary.

'My child,' said Madame Mignon to Modeste, who came in, followed by Butscha, 'did you happen to see in church this morning a well-dressed little man with a white rose in his buttonhole, and the rosette——'

'I saw him,' Butscha hastily put in, seeing by the attention of the whole party what a trap Modeste might fall into. 'It was Grindot, the famous architect, with whom the town is treating for the restoration of the church. He came from Paris, and I found him this

morning examining the outside as I set out for Sainte-Adresse.'

'Oh! he is an architect! He puzzled me greatly,' said Modeste, to whom Butscha had secured time to recover herself.

Dumay looked askance at Butscha. Modeste, put on her guard, assumed an impenetrable demeanour. Dumay's suspicions were excited to the highest pitch, and he resolved to go next day to the Mairie and ascertain whether the expected architect had in fact been at le Havre. Butscha, on his part, very uneasy as to Modeste's ultimate fate, decided on starting for Paris to set a watch over Canalis.

Gobenheim arrived in time to play a rubber, and his presence repressed the ferment of feeling. Modeste awaited her mother's bedtime almost with impatience; she wanted to write, and this is the letter her love dictated to her when she thought that every one was asleep.

XIII.

To Monsieur de Canalis.

'Oh, my best-beloved friend, what vile libels are your portraits displayed in the print-sellers' windows! And I who was happy with that detestable lithograph! I am quite shy of loving such a handsome man. No, I cannot conceive that Paris women can be so stupid as not to see, one and all, that you are the fulfilment of their dreams. You neglected! You loveless!—I do not believe a word you have said about your obscure and laborious life, your devotion to an idol till now vainly sought for. You have been too well loved, Monsieur; your brow, as pale and smooth as a magnolia petal, plainly shows it, and I shall be wretched.

'What am I now?—Ah! why have you called me forth to life? In one instant I felt that I had shed my ponderous chrysalis! My soul burst the crystal which held it captive; it rushed through my veins. In short, the cold silence of things suddenly ceased to me; everything in nature spoke to me. The old church to me was luminous; its vault, glittering with gold and azure, like that of an Italian church, sparkled above my head. The melodious strains, sung by angels to martyrs to make them forget their anguish, sounded through the organ! The hideous pavement of le Havre seemed like a flowery path. I recognised the sea as an old friend, whose language, full of sympathy, I had never known well enough. I saw how the roses in my garden and greenhouse had long worshipped me, and whispered to me to love! They all smiled on me on my return from church; and, to crown all, I heard your name of Melchior murmured by the flower-bells; I saw it written on the clouds! Yes, I am indeed alive, thanks to you—poet more beautiful than that cold and prim Lord Byron, whose face is as dull as the English climate. Wedded to you by one only of your Oriental glances which pierced my black veil, you transfused your blood into my veins, and it fired me from head to foot. Ah, we do not feel life like that when our mothers bring us into the world? A blow dealt to you would fall on me at the same instant, and my existence henceforth can only be accounted for by your mind. I know now the purpose of the divine harmony of music; it was invented by the angels to express love.

'To be a genius and handsome too, my Melchior, is too much. A man should have a choice at his birth. But when I think of the treasures of tenderness and affection you have lavished on me, especially during this last month, I wonder whether I am dreaming! Nay, you must be hiding some mystery. What woman could give you up without dying of it? Yes, jealousy has

entered my heart with such love as I could not believe in! Could I imagine such a conflagration?

'A new and inconceivable vagary! I now wish you were ugly! What follies I committed when I got home! Every yellow dahlia reminded me of your pretty waistcoat, every white rose was a friend, and I greeted them with a look which was yours, as I am wholly! The colour of the gentleman's well-fitting gloves—everything, to the sound of his step on the flagstones—everything is so exactly represented by my memory that, sixty years hence, I shall still see the smallest details of this high day, the particular colour of the atmosphere, and the gleam of the sunbeam reflected from a pillar; I shall hear the prayer which your advent broke into; I shall breathe the incense from the altar; and I shall fancy that I feel above our heads the hands of the priest who was giving us the final benediction just as you went past. That good Abbé Marcellin has married us already. The superhuman joy of experiencing this world of new and unexpected emotions can only be equalled by the joy I feel in telling you of them, in rendering up all my happiness to him who pours it into my soul with the unstinting bounty of the sun. So no more veils, my beloved! Come, oh, come back soon! I will unmask with joy.

'You have, no doubt, heard of the firm of Mignon of le Havre? Well, in consequence of an irreparable loss, I am the sole heiress of the family. Do not scorn us, you who are descended from one of the heroes of Auvergne. The arms of Mignon de la Bastie will not dishonour those of Canalis. They are *gules, a bend sable charged with three besants, in each quarter a patriarchal cross or*, surmounted by a cardinal's hat, and the cord and tassels as mantling. My dear, I will be faithful to our motto, *Una fides, unus Dominus!* The true faith, and one Lord.

'Perhaps, my friend, you will think there is some

irony in my name after all I have here confessed. It is Modeste. Thus, I did not altogether cheat you in signing "O. d'Este-M." Nor did I deceive you in speaking of my fortune; it will, I believe, amount to the sum which has made you so virtuous. And I know so surely that to you money is so unimportant a consideration, that I can write of it unaffectedly. At the same time, you must let me tell you how glad I am to be able to endow our happiness with the freedom of action and movement that wealth gives, the power of saying, "Let us go——" when the fancy takes us to see a foreign land, of flying off in a comfortable carriage, seated side by side, without a care about money; and happy, too, to give you the right of saying to the King, "I have such a fortune as you require in your peers!"

'In this, Modeste Mignon can be of some service to you, and her money will find noble uses. As to your humble servant, you have seen her once, at her window in a wrapper.—Yes, the fair-haired daughter of Eve was your unknown correspondent; but how little does the Modeste of to-day resemble her whom you then saw! She was wrapped in a shroud, and this other—have I not told you so?—has derived from you the life of life. Pure and permitted love, a love that my father, now at last returning from his travels and with riches, will sanction, has uplifted me with its childlike but powerful hand from the depths of the tomb where I was sleeping. You awoke me as the sun awakes the flowers. The glance of her you love is not now that of the bold-faced little Modeste! Oh, no; it is bashful, it has glimpses of happiness, and veils itself under chaste eyelids. My fear now is that I cannot deserve my lot. The King has appeared in his glory; my liege has now a mere vassal, who implores his forgiveness for taking such liberties, as the thimble-rigger with loaded dice did after cheating the Chevalier de Grammont.

'Yes, beloved poet, I will be your "Mignon," but a

happier Mignon than Goethe's, for you will leave me to dwell in my native land, won't you?—in your heart.

'As I write this bridal wish, a nightingale in the Vilquins' park has just answered for you. Oh! let me quickly hear that the nightingale, with his long-drawn note, so pure, so clear, so full, inundating my heart with love and gladness, like an Annunciation, has not lied.

'My father will pass through Paris on his way from Marseilles. The house of Mongenod, his correspondents, will know his address; go to see him, my dearest Melchior, tell him that you love me, and do not try to tell him how much I love you; let that be a secret always between us and God! I, dear adored one, will tell my mother everything. She, a daughter of Wallenrod Tustall-Bartenstild, will justify me by her caresses; she will be made happy by our secret and romantic poem, at once human and divine! You have the daughter's pledge; now obtain the consent of the Comte de la Bastie, the father of your own MODESTE.

'*P.S.*—Above all, do not come to le Havre without having obtained my father's permission; and, if you love me, you will be able to discover him on his way through Paris.'

'What are you doing at this time of night, Mademoiselle Modeste?' asked Dumay.

'I am writing to my father,' she replied to the old soldier. 'Did you not tell me that you were starting to-morrow?'

Dumay had no answer to this, and went to bed, while Modeste wrote a long letter to her father.

Next day Françoise Cochet, alarmed at seeing the Havre postmark, came up to the Chalet to deliver to her young mistress the following letter, and carry away that which Modeste had written.

To Mademoiselle O. d'Este-M.

'My heart warns me that you were the woman, so carefully veiled and disguised, placed between Monsieur and Madame Latournelle, who have but one child, a son. Ah, dearly loved one! if you are of humble rank, devoid of position, distinction, or even fortune, you cannot imagine what my joy would be. You must know me by this time; why not tell me the whole truth? I am no poet excepting through love, in my heart, and for you. Oh, what immense affection I must have to stay here, in this Hôtel de Normandie, and not walk up to Ingouville, that I can see from my windows? Will you love me as I love you? To have to leave le Havre for Paris in such uncertainty? Is not that being punished for loving as if I had committed a crime?—I have obeyed you blindly.

'Ah! let me soon have a letter; for, if you are mysterious, I have returned mystery for mystery, and I must at last throw off the mask of my incognito, and tell you how little I am a poet, abdicating the glory you have lent me.'

This letter greatly disturbed Modeste; she could not withdraw her own, which Françoise had already posted by the time she read the last lines once more, puzzled as to their meaning; but she went up to her room, and wrote an answer, asking for explanations.

During these little incidents, others, equally small, were happening in the town, and were destined to make Modeste forget her uneasiness. Dumay, having gone early to le Havre, at once knew that no architect had arrived there the night before last. Furious at the lie told him by Butscha, which revealed a complicity which he would know the meaning of, he hurried from the Mairie to the Latournelles.

'Where is your Master Butscha?' asked he of his

friend the notary, on not finding the clerk in the office.

'Butscha, my dear fellow? He is on the road to Paris, whisked away by the steamboat. Early this morning, on the quay, he met a sailor, who told him that his father, the Swedish sailor, has come into some money. Butscha's father went to India, it would seem, and served some prince, a Mahratta, and he is now in Paris——'

'A pack of lies! Shameful! Monstrous! Oh, I will find that damned hunchback; I am going to Paris, and on purpose for that!' cried Dumay. 'Butscha is deceiving us! He knows something about Modeste, and has never told us. If he dares meddle in the matter—— He shall never be a notary; I will cast him back on his mother, in the mire, in the——'

'Come, my friend, never hang a man without trying him,' replied Latournelle, terrified at Dumay's exasperation.

After explaining on what his suspicions were founded, Dumay begged Madame Latournelle to stay at the Chalet with Modeste during his absence.

'You will find the Colonel in Paris,' said the notary. 'In the shipping news this morning, in the *Commerce* newspaper, under the heading of Marseilles.—Here, look!' he said, handing him the sheet, '"The *Bettina-Mignon*, Captain Mignon, arrived October 16th," and to-day is the 17th. At this moment all le Havre knows of the master's return.'

Dumay requested Gobenheim to dispense henceforth with his services; he then returned at once to the Chalet, going in at the moment when Modeste had just closed her letters to her father and to Canalis. The two letters were exactly alike in shape and thickness, differing only in the address. Modeste thought she had laid that to her father over that to her Melchior, and had done just the reverse. This mistake, so common in the

trifles of life, led to the discovery of her secret by her mother and Dumay.

The lieutenant was talking eagerly to Madame Mignon in the drawing-room, confiding to her the fresh fears to which Modeste's duplicity and Butscha's connivance had given rise.

'I tell you, Madame,' he exclaimed, 'he is a viper we have warmed on our hearth; there is not room for a soul in these fag-ends of humanity.'

Modeste had slipped the letter to her father into her pocket, fancying that it was the letter to her lover, and went down with that addressed to Canalis in her hand, hearing Dumay speak of starting immediately for Paris.

'What is wrong with my poor Mysterious Dwarf, and why are you talking so loud?' said she at the door of the drawing-room.

'Butscha, Mademoiselle, set out for Paris this morning, and you, no doubt, can say why!—It must be to carry on some intrigue with the so-called little architect in a sulphur-coloured waistcoat, who, unluckily for the hunchback's falsehood, has not yet been to le Havre.'

Modeste was startled; she guessed that the dwarf had gone off to make his own inquiries as to the poet's manners and customs; she turned pale, and sat down.

'I will be after him; I will find him!' said Dumay. 'That, no doubt, is the letter for your father?' he added, holding out his hand. 'I will send it to Mongenod's—if only my Colonel and I do not cross on the way.'

Modeste gave him the letter. Little Dumay, who could read without spectacles, mechanically read the address—

'Monsieur le Baron de Canalis, Rue de Paradis-Poissonnière, No. 29!' he exclaimed. 'What is the meaning of this?'

'Ah! my child, then he is the man you love!' cried Madame Mignon. 'The verses you set to music are by him——'

'And it is his portrait that you have upstairs in a frame!' added Dumay.

'Give me back that letter, Monsieur Dumay,' said Modeste, drawing herself up, like a lioness defending her cubs.

'Here it is, Mademoiselle,' he replied. Modeste slipped the letter into her bosom, and held out to Dumay that addressed to her father.

'I know you to be capable of anything, Dumay,' said she; 'but if you move a single step towards Monsieur de Canalis, I will take one out of this house, and never come back!'

'You will kill your mother!' replied Dumay, who went to call his wife.

The poor mother had fainted away, stricken to the heart by Modeste's threatening speech.

'Good-bye, wife,' said the Breton, embracing the little American. 'Save the mother; I am going to save the daughter.'

He left Modeste and Madame Dumay with Madame Mignon, made his preparations in a few minutes, and went down to le Havre. An hour later he set off by post with the swiftness which passion or interest alone can give to the wheels.

Madame Mignon soon revived under her daughter's care, and went up to her room, leaning on Modeste's arm; the only reproach she uttered when they were alone was to say, 'Unhappy child! what have you done? Why hide anything from me? Am I so stern?'

'Why, of course, I was going to tell you everything, replied the girl in tears.

She told her mother the whole story; she read her all the letters and replies; she plucked the rose of her poem to pieces, petal by petal, to lay in the heart of the kind German lady; this took up half the day. When her confession was ended, and she saw something like a smile

on the lips of the too indulgent blind woman, she threw herself into her arms with tears.

'Oh, mother!' cried she, in the midst of her sobs, 'you whose heart is of gold, and all poetry, and like some choice vessel moulded by God to contain the one pure and heavenly love that can fill a whole life!—you whom I long to imitate by loving nothing on earth but my husband—you must know how bitter are these tears which I shed at this moment, which fall wet on your hands.—The butterfly with iridescent wings, that beautiful second soul which your daughter has cherished with maternal care—my love, my sacred love, that inspired and living mystery, has fallen into vulgar hands that will tear its wings and its veil under the cruel pretext of enlightening me, of inquiring whether genius is as correct as a banker, if my Melchior is capable of amassing dividends, if he has some love affair to be unearthed, if he is not guilty in vulgar eyes of some youthful episode, which to our love is what a cloud is to the sun. What are they going to do?—Here, feel my hand; I am in a fever! They will kill me!'

Modeste, seized by a deadly shivering fit, was obliged to go to bed, alarming her mother, Madame Latournelle, and Madame Dumay, who nursed her while the Lieutenant was travelling to Paris, whither the logic of events transfers our tale for the moment.

Men who are truly modest, like Ernest de la Brière, and especially those who, though knowing their own value, are neither loved nor appreciated, will understand the infinite rapture in which the young secretary revelled as he read Modeste's letter. After discovering the wit and greatness of his mind, his young and guileless but wily mistress thought him handsome. This is the supremest flattery. Why? Because beauty is no doubt the Master's signature on the work into which He has infused His soul; it is the divinity made manifest; and to

see it where it does not exist, to create it by the power of an enchanted eye, is—is it not?—the crowning magic of love.

And the poor young fellow could exclaim to himself with the ecstasy of an applauded author—

'At last I am loved!'

When once a woman, a courtesan, or an innocent girl has let the words escape her, 'How handsome you are!' even if it be untrue, if the man allows the subtle poison of the words to enter his brain, he is thenceforth tied by eternal bonds to the bewitching liar, to the truthful or deluded woman; she is his world; he thirsts for this testimony; he would never weary of it, not even if he were a prince.

Ernest proudly paced his room; he stood in front of the mirror—three-quarter face, in profile; he tried to criticise his own features, but a diabolical, insinuating voice said to him, 'Modeste is right!' and he came back to the letter and read it again. He saw the heavenly fair one, he talked to her! Then, in the midst of his rapture, came the overwhelming thought, 'She believes me to be Canalis, and she is a millionaire!'

All his happiness fell with a crash, as a man falls when, walking in his sleep, he has reached the ridge of a roof, and hearing a voice, steps forward, and is dashed to pieces on the stones.

'But for the halo of glory, I should be ugly!' cried he. 'What a horrible predicament I have got myself into!'

La Brière was too thoroughly the man of his letters, too entirely the pure and noble soul he had shown in them, to hesitate at the voice of honour. He at once resolved to go and confess everything to Modeste's father if he were in Paris, and to inform Canalis fully of the outcome of their very Parisian practical joke. To this sensitive young fellow the vastness of Modeste's fortune was a casting reason. Above all, he would not be suspected of having used the stimulation of this cor-

respondence, though on his side so perfectly sincere, for filching a fortune. Tears stood in his eyes as he walked from his rooms in the Rue Chantereine to Mongenod the banker's, whose prosperity, connections, and prospects were partly the work of the Minister to whom he himself was indebted.

At the time when La Brière was closeted with the head of the house of Mongenod, and acquiring all the information he needed in his strange position, such a scene was taking place in Canalis' house as Dumay's hasty departure might have led us to expect.

Dumay, like a true soldier of the Imperial School, whose blood had been boiling all through his journey, conceived of a poet as an irresponsible fellow, a man who fooled in rhyme, living in a garret, dressed in black cloth white at all the seams, whose boots sometimes had soles, whose linen was anonymous, who always looked as if he had just dropped from the clouds, when he was not scribbling as intently as Butscha. But the ferment that muttered in his brain and heart received a sort of cold shower-bath when he reached the poet's handsome residence, saw a man cleaning a carriage in the courtyard, found himself in a splendid dining-room with another servant dressed like a banker, to whom the groom had referred him, and who looked him from head to foot as he said that Monsieur le Baron could not see any one.

'Monsieur le Baron has a meeting to-day,' he added, 'at the Council of State.'

'I am right?' asked Dumay; 'this is the house of Monsieur de Canalis, who writes poetry?'

'Monsieur le Baron de Canalis,' said the footman, 'is no doubt the great poet you mean; but is also Master of Appeals to the State Council, and attached to the Foreign Office.'

Dumay, who had come to box a rhymester's ears, to use his own contemptuous expression, had found a State functionary. The drawing-room where he was kept

waiting, remarkable for its magnificence, presented to his contemplation the row of crosses that glittered on Canalis' evening coat, left by the servant over the back of a chair. Presently he was attracted by the sheen and workmanship of a silver gilt cup, and the words, 'The gift of MADAME,' struck his eye. Opposite this, on a bracket, was a Sèvres vase, over which was engraved, 'Given by Madame la Dauphine.' These silent warnings restored Dumay to his common sense, while the man-servant was asking his master whether he could receive a stranger, who had come from le Havre on purpose to see him—his name Dumay.

'What is he like?' asked Canalis.

'Has a good hat, and the red ribbon.'

At a nod of assent, the man went out, and returned announcing—

'Monsieur Dumay.'

When he heard his own name, when he stood before Canalis in a study as costly as it was elegant, his feet on a carpet quite as good as the best in the Mignons' old house, when he met the glance prepared by the poet, who was playing with the tassels of a sumptuous dressing-gown, Dumay was so absolutely dumbfounded that he left the great man to speak first.

'To what, Monsieur, do I owe the honour of this visit?'

'Monsieur,' Dumay began, still standing.

'If you have much to say, pray be seated,' said Canalis, interrupting him; and the poet sank back into his large easy-chair, and crossed his legs, raising the upper one to rock his foot on a level with his eye, while staring hard at Dumay, who, to use his own soldier's phrase, felt like a dummy.

'I am listening, Monsieur,' said the poet. 'My time is precious; I am due at the office——'

'Monsieur,' said Dumay, 'I will be brief. You have bewitched—how I know not—a young lady at le Havre

—handsome, rich, the last and only hope of two noble families, and I have come to ask you your intentions.'

Canalis, who for the last three months had been absorbed by serious matters, who aimed at promotion to the grade of Commander of the Legion of Honour, and to be Minister to a German Court, had totally forgotten the letter from le Havre.

'I?' cried he.

'You,' replied Dumay.

'Monsieur,' said Canalis, smiling, 'I know no more what you mean than if you were talking Hebrew. I bewitch a young girl?—I, who——?' A lordly smile curled the poet's lip. 'Come, Monsieur. I am not a boy that I should amuse myself by stealing poor wild fruit when I have ample orchards open to me, where the finest peaches in the world ripen. All Paris knows where my affections are placed. That there should be at le Havre a young lady suffering from some admiration, of which I am wholly unworthy, for the verses I have written, my dear sir, would not astonish me! Nothing is commoner. Look there! You see that handsome ebony-box inlaid with mother-of-pearl, and fitted with iron wrought as fine as lace. That coffer belonged to Pope Leo x.; it was given to me by the Duchesse de Chaulieu, who had it from the King of Spain.—I have devoted it to the preservation of all the letters I receive from every part of Europe, written by unknown women and girls. Oh! I have the greatest respect for those posies of flowers culled from the very soul, and sent to me in a moment of enthusiasm that is indeed worthy of all respect. Yes, to me the impulse of a heart is a noble and beautiful thing!—Others, mocking spirits, screw up such notes to light their cigars, or give them to their wives for curl-papers; I—who am a bachelor, Monsieur—have too much delicate feeling not to treasure these artless and disinterested offerings in a kind of tabernacle; indeed, I hoard them with no little reverence, and when

I am dying I will see them burnt under my eyes. So much the worse for those who think me ridiculous! What is to be said? I am grateful by nature, and these testimonials help me to endure the criticisms and annoyances of a literary life. When I receive in my spine the broadside of an enemy in ambush behind a newspaper, I look at that chest and say to myself, 'There are, here and there, a few souls whose wounds have been healed, or beguiled or staunched by me——"'

This rodomontade, pronounced with the cleverness of a great actor, petrified the little cashier, whose eyes dilated while his astonishment amused the great poet.

'To you,' the peacock went on, still spreading his tail, 'out of respect for a position I can sympathise with, I can but propose that you should open that treasury, and look there for your young lady; but I never forget names. I know what I am saying, and you are mistaken . . .'

'And this is what happens to a poor girl in this gulf called Paris!' cried Dumay. 'The idol of her parents, the delight of her friends, the hope, the darling of them all; the pride of her family, for whom six persons have made a rampart against disaster of their hearts and their fortunes!'

Dumay paused, and then went on—

'Well, Monsieur, you are a great poet, and I am but a poor soldier. For fifteen years, while I served my country in the ranks, I felt the wind of many a bullet in my face, I crossed Siberia, where I was kept a prisoner, the Russians flung me on a truck like a bale of goods, I have endured everything; I have seen no end of my comrades die—— And you, Monsieur, have sent such a chill through my bones as I never felt before!'

Dumay believed that he had touched the poet; he had flattered him—an almost impossible achievement, for the ambitious man had by this time forgotten the first phial of precious balm that Praise had broken on his head.

'You see, my brave friend,' said the poet solemnly, as he laid his hand on Dumay's shoulder, feeling it a strange thing that he should be able to make a soldier of the Empire shiver, 'this girl is everything to you—— But to society, what is she? Nothing. If at this moment the most important mandarin in China is closing his eyes and putting the Empire into mourning, does that grieve you deeply? In India the English are killing thousands of men as good as we are; and at this moment, as I speak, the most charming woman is there being burnt—but you have had coffee for breakfast all the same? Indeed, at this minute, here in Paris, you may find several mothers of families lying on straw and bringing a child into the world without a rag to wrap it in!—And here is some delicious tea in a cup that cost five louis, and I am writing verses to make the ladies of Paris exclaim, "*Charming, charming! divine, exquisite! it goes to the heart!*"

'Social nature, like Mother Nature herself, is great at forgetting. Ten years hence you will be amazed at the step you have taken. You are in a city where we die, and marry, and worship each other at an assignation; where a girl suffocates herself, while a man of genius and his cargo of ideas full of humanitarian benefits go to the bottom, side by side, often under the same roof, and knowing nothing of each other.—And you come and expect us to swoon with anguish at this commonplace question, "Is a certain young person at le Havre this or that, or is she not?"—Oh, you really are——'

'And you call yourself a poet!' cried Dumay. 'But do you really feel nothing of what you depict?'

'If we felt all the misery or joy that we describe, we should be worn out in a few months, like old shoes,' said the poet, smiling. 'Listen, you shall not have come from le Havre to Paris, and to me, Canalis, without having anything to take back with you. Soldier!'—and Canalis had the figure and gesture of an Homeric hero—'learn

this from the poet, "Every noble feeling in each of us is a poem so essentially individual that our best friend, our self, takes no interest in it. It is a treasure belonging to each alone——"'

'Forgive me for interrupting you,' said Dumay, who gazed at Canalis with horror, 'but have you been to le Havre?'

'I spent a night and day there in the spring of 1824 on my way to London.'

'You are a man of honour,' Dumay went on. 'Can you give me your word of honour that you do not know Mademoiselle Modeste Mignon?'

'This is the first time I ever heard her name,' replied Canalis.

'Oh, Monsieur,' cried Dumay, 'into what dark intrigue am I about to plunge? May I count on you to help me in my inquiries? For some one, I am certain, has been making use of your name. You ought to have received a letter yesterday from le Havre.'

'I have received nothing! You may be sure, Monsieur, that I will do all that lies in my power to be of service to you.'

Dumay took leave, his heart full of anxiety, believing that hideous little Butscha had hidden himself in the semblance of the great poet to captivate Modeste; while Butscha, on the contrary, as keen and clever as a prince who avenges himself, sharper than a spy, was making inquisition into the poet's life and actions, escaping detection by his insignificance like an insect working its way into the young wood of a tree.

The Breton had but just left when La Brière came into his friend's room. Canalis naturally mentioned the visit of this man from le Havre.

'Hah!' said Ernest, 'Modeste Mignon! I have come on purpose to speak about that affair.'

'Bless me!' cried Canalis, 'do you mean to say I have made a conquest by proxy?'

'Why, yes, that is the turning-point of the drama. My friend, I am loved by the sweetest girl in the world, beautiful enough to shine among the beauties of Paris, with a heart and education worthy of Clarissa Harlowe; she has seen me, she likes my looks—and she believes me to be the great poet Canalis.

'Nor is this all: Modeste Mignon is of good birth, and Mongenod has just told me that her father, the Comte de la Bastie, must have a fortune of something like six millions of francs. This father has come home within three days, and I have just begged him to arrange an interview with me, at two o'clock—through Mongenod, who in his note mentioned that it concerned his daughter's happiness.—You will understand that before meeting the father I was bound to tell you everything.'

'Among all the blossoms that open to the sunshine of fame,' said Canalis with emphasis, 'there is one glorious plant which, like the orange, bears its golden fruit amid the thousand united perfumes of wit and beauty! one elegant shrub, one true passion, one perfect happiness—and it has evaded me!' Canalis kept his eyes on the carpet that Ernest might not read them. 'How,' he went on after a pause, to recover his presence of mind, 'how is it possible, among the intoxicating scents of these fancy-paper notes, and these phrases that mount to the brain, to detect the genuine heart—the girl, the woman, in whom true love is hidden under the livery of flattery, who loves us for ourselves, and who offers us happiness? No one could do it but an angel or a demon, and I am only an ambitious Master of Appeals!

'Ah, my dear fellow, fame transforms us into a butt, a target for a thousand arrows. One of us owed his marriage to a copy of hydraulic verses; and I, even more ingratiating, more the ladies' man than he, shall have missed my chance—for you love this poor girl?' said he, looking at La Brière.

'Oh!' cried La Brière.

'Well, then, be happy, Ernest,' said the poet, taking his friend's arm and leaning on it. 'As it turns out, I shall not have been ungrateful to you! You are handsomely rewarded for your devotion, for I will be generously helpful to your happiness.'

Canalis was furious, but he could not behave otherwise, so he took the benefit of his ill-luck by using it as a pedestal. A tear rose to the young secretary's eye; he threw his arms round Canalis and embraced him.

'Oh, Canalis, I did not half know you!'

'What did you expect? It takes time to travel round the world,' replied the poet with emphatic irony.

'Consider,' said La Brière, 'that immense fortune?——'

'Well, my friend, will it not be in good hands?' cried Canalis, pointing his effusiveness by a charming gesture.

'Melchior,' said La Brière, 'I am yours in life and death.'

He wrung the poet's hands, and went away hastily; he was eager to see Monsieur Mignon.

At this hour the Comte de la Bastie was suffering all the sorrows that had been lurking for him as their prey. He had learnt from his daughter's letter the facts of Bettina-Caroline's death and her mother's blindness; and Dumay had just told him the story of the terrible imbroglio of Modeste's love affair.

'Leave me to myself,' he said to his faithful friend.

When the lieutenant had closed the door, the unhappy father threw himself on a couch and lay there, his head in his hands, shedding the few thin tears that lie under the eyelids of a man of fifty-six without falling, wetting them, but drying quickly and rising again, the last dews of the autumn of human life.

'To have children you love and a wife you adore, is to have many hearts and offer them all to the dagger!'

cried he, starting to his feet with a furious bound, and pacing the room. 'To be a father is to give oneself over to misfortune, bound hand and foot. If I meet that fellow d'Estourny I will kill him. Daughters! Who would have daughters? One gets hold of a scoundrel; and the other, my Modeste, of what? A coward, who deludes her under the gilt-paper armour of a poet. If only it were Canalis! There would be no great harm done. But this Scapin of a lover!—I will throttle him with my own hands!' said he to himself, with an involuntary gesture of energetic atrocity. 'And what then,' he thought, 'if my child should die of grief.'

Mechanically he looked out of the window of the Hotel des Princes, and came back to sit down on the divan, where he remained motionless. The fatigue of six voyages to the Indies, the anxieties of investments, the dangers he had met and escaped, care and sorrow had silvered Charles Mignon's hair. His fine military face, clean in outline, was bronzed by the sun of Malaysia, China, and Asia Minor, and had assumed an imposing expression, which grief at this moment made sublime.

'And Mongenod tells me I can perfectly trust the young man who is to come to speak to me about my daughter!——'

Ernest de La Brière was just then announced by one of the servants whom the Comte de la Bastie had attached to him in the course of these four years, and had picked out from the crowd of men under him.

'You come, Monsieur, with an introduction from my friend Mongenod?' said he.

'Yes,' replied Ernest, gazing timidly at a face as gloomy as Othello's. 'My name is Ernest de la Brière, connected, Monsieur, with the family of the late Prime Minister; I was his private secretary when he was in office. At his fall, His Excellency was good enough to

place me in the Court of Exchequer, where I am now first-class Referendary, and where I may rise to be a Master——'

'And what has all this to do with Mademoiselle de la Bastie?' asked Charles Mignon.

'Monsieur, I love her, and it is my unhoped-for happiness to be loved by her. . . . Listen, Monsieur,' said Ernest, interrupting a terrible movement on the part of the angry father, 'I have the strangest confession to make to you, the most ignominious for a man of honour. And the worst punishment of my conduct, which perhaps was natural, is not this revelation to you—I dread the daughter even more than the father.'

Ernest then told the prologue of this domestic drama, quite simply, and with the dignity of sincerity; he did not omit the twenty and odd letters they had exchanged—he had brought them with him—nor the interview he had just had with Canalis. When the father had read all these letters, the poor lover, pale and suppliant, quaked before the fiery looks of the Provençal.

'Well, Monsieur,' said Mignon, 'in all this there is only one mistake, but it is all-important. My daughter has not six millions of francs; her fortune at most is two hundred thousand francs in settlement, and very doubtful expectations.'

'Oh, Monsieur!' cried Ernest, throwing his arms round Charles Mignon, and hugging him, 'you relieve me of a load that oppressed me. Now, perhaps, nothing will come in the way of my happiness!—I have interest; I shall soon be Master of the Exchequer. If she had but ten thousand francs, if I had to accept nominal settlements, Mademoiselle Mignon would still be the wife of my choice; and to make her happy, as happy as you have made yours, to be a true son to you—yes, Monsieur, for my father is dead—this is the deepest wish of my heart.'

Charles Mignon drew back three steps, and fixed on

La Brière a look that sank into the young man's eyes, as a poniard goes into its sheath; then he stood silent, reading in those fascinated eyes and on that eager countenance the most perfect candour and the purest truthfulness.

'Is fate at last wearied out?' said he to himself in an undertone. 'Can I have found a paragon son-in-law in this youth?' He walked up and down the room in great excitement.

'Well, Monsieur,' he said at length, 'you owe implicit obedience to the sentence you have come to ask, for otherwise you would at this moment be acting a mere farce.'

'Indeed, Monsieur——'

'Listen to me,' said the father, nailing La Brière to the spot by a look. 'I will be neither severe, nor hard, nor unjust. You must take the disadvantages with the advantages of the false position in which you have placed yourself. My daughter imagines that she is in love with one of the great poets of our day, whose fame chiefly has fascinated her. Well, then, ought not I, as her father, to enable her to choose between the celebrity which has seemed a lighthouse to her, and the humble reality thrown to her by chance in the irony it so often allows itself? Must she not be free to choose between you and Canalis? I trust to your honour to be silent as to what I have just told you concerning the state of my affairs. You and your friend, the Baron de Canalis, must come to spend the last fortnight of this month of October at le Havre. My house will be open to you both; my daughter will have the opportunity of knowing you. Remember, you yourself are to bring your rival, and to allow him to believe all the fables that may be current as to the Comte de la Bastie's millions. I shall be at le Havre by to-morrow, and shall expect you three days later. Good morning, Monsieur.'

Poor La Brière very slowly made his way back to Canalis. At that moment the poet, face to face with

himself, could give himself up to the torrent of reflections that flow from that 'second thought' which Talleyrand so highly praised. The first thought is the impulse of nature, the second that of society.

'A girl with six millions of francs! And my eyes failed to discern the glitter of that gold through the darkness! With such a fortune as that, I can be a peer of France, count, ambassador!—I have answered the most ordinary women, simpletons, intriguing girls who only wanted an autograph! And I rebelled against these *bal masqué* wiles on the very day when heaven sent me a chosen soul, an angel with wings of gold!—Pooh! I will write a sublime poem, and the chance will come again! What luck for that little La Brière, who spread his tail in my sunbeams!—And what plagiary. I am the model, and he is to be the statue! This is playing the fable of "Bertrand and Raton."—Six millions, and an angel, a Mignon de la Bastie! An aristocratic angel, who loves poetry and the poet!—And I meanwhile display my muscles as a strong man, perform athletics, like Alcides, to astonish this champion of physical strength by moral force—this brave soldier full of fine feeling, this young girl's friend, who will tell her I have a soul of iron. I am playing Napoleon, when I ought to show myself as a seraph!—I shall have won a friend perhaps, and have paid dear for him; but friendship is a fine thing. Six millions—that is the price of a friend; a man cannot have many at that figure!'

At this last point of exclamation La Brière came into his friend's room; he was depressed.

'Well, what is the matter?' said Canalis.

'The father insists that his daughter shall be enabled to choose between the two Canalis——'

'Poor boy!' said the poet, laughing. 'A clever man is that father!'

'I have pledged my honour to take you to le Havre,' said La Brière dolefully.

'My dear boy,' said Canalis, 'if your honour is at stake, you may depend upon me. I will ask for a month's leave of absence.'

'Oh, Modeste is lovely!' cried La Brière in despair, 'and you will easily extinguish me! Still, I was amazed to find good fortune coming my way; I said to myself, it is all a mistake!'

'Pooh! We shall see,' said Canalis with ruthless cheerfulness.

That evening, after dinner, Charles Mignon and his cashier were flying, at the cost of three francs a stage to the postillion, from Paris to le Havre. The father had completely allayed his watch-dog's alarms as to Modeste's love affairs, had released him from his responsibilities, and reassured him as to Butscha's proceedings.

'Everything is for the best, my good old friend,' said Charles, who had made inquiries of Mongenod as to Canalis and La Brière. 'We have two players for one part,' he added, laughing.

At the same time, he enjoined absolute silence on his old comrade as to the comedy about to be played at the Chalet, and his gentle revenge, or, if you will, the lesson to be given by a father to his child. From Paris to le Havre was one long dialogue between the friends, by which the Colonel learnt the smallest events that had happened in his family during the past four years; and Charles told Dumay that Desplein, the great surgeon, was to come before the end of the month to examine the Countess's eyes, and decide whether it would be possible to remove the cataract and restore her sight.

A few minutes before the breakfast hour at the Chalet, the cracking of a whip, by a postillion counting on a large gratuity, announced the return of the two soldiers. Only the joy of a father coming home to his family after a long absence would give rise to such a detonation, and all the women were standing at the little gate.

There are so many fathers, and so many children—more fathers perhaps than children—who can enter into the excitement of such a meeting, that literature is never required to depict it; happily! for the finest words, and poetry itself, are inadequate to such emotions. Perhaps, indeed, the sweeter emotions have no literary side.

Not a word was spoken that day that could disturb the happiness of the Mignon family. There was a truce between the father, the mother, and the daughter as to the mysterious love affair which had paled Modeste's cheek. She was up to-day for the first time. The Colonel, with the delicate tenderness that characterises a true soldier, sat all the time by his wife's side, her hand constantly held in his, and he watched Modeste, never tired of admiring her refined, elegant, and poetic beauty. Is it not by such small things that we know a man of true feeling?

Modeste, fearful of troubling the melancholy happiness of her father and mother, came from time to time to kiss the traveller's brow, and by kissing him so often, seemed to wish to kiss him for two.

'Ah, darling child! I understand you,' said her father, pressing Modeste's hand at a moment when she was smothering him with affection.

'Hush!' said Modeste in his ear, pointing to her mother.

Dumay's rather perfidious silence left Modeste very uneasy as to the results of his journey to Paris; she now and then stole a look at the lieutenant, but could not penetrate that tough skin. The Colonel, as a prudent father, wished to study his only daughter's nature, and, above all, to consult his wife, before proceeding to a discussion on which the happiness of the whole family would depend.

'To-morrow, my dearest child, rise early,' said he at night, 'and if it is fine, we will go for a walk together

on the seashore. We have to talk over your poems, Mademoiselle de la Bastie.'

These words, spoken with a smile that was reflected on Dumay's lips, were all Modeste could know; still, this was enough to allay her anxiety and to make her too curious to get to sleep till late, so busy was her fancy.

Next morning Modeste was dressed and ready before the Colonel.

'You know everything, my dear father,' said she, as soon as they had started on their way to the sea.

'I know everything—and a good many things that you do not know,' replied he.

Thereupon the father and daughter walked some few steps in silence.

'Now, tell me, my child, how a daughter so worshipped by her mother could take so decisive a step as to write to a man unknown to her without asking that mother's advice?'

'Well, papa, because mamma would not have allowed it.'

'And do you think, my child, that it was right? Though you have inevitably been left to bring yourself up, how is it that your reason or your insight—if modesty failed you—did not tell you that to act in such a way was to throw yourself at a man's head? Can it be that my daughter, my only child, lacks pride and delicacy? Oh! Modeste, you gave your father two hours of hell's torments in Paris; for, in point of fact, your conduct, morally, has been the same as Bettina's, without having the excuse of seduction; you have been a coquette in cold blood, and that is love without heart, the worst vice of the French woman.'

'I—without pride?' said Modeste in tears. 'But he has never seen me!'

'*He* knows your name.'

'I never let him know it till the moment when our

eyes had set the seal to three months of correspondence, during which our souls had spoken to each other!'

'Yes, my dear mistaken angel, you have brought a kind of reason to bear on this madness which has compromised your happiness and your family.'

'Well, after all, papa, happiness is the justification of such boldness,' said she, with a touch of temper.

'Ah! Then it is merely boldness?' cried her father.

'Such boldness as my mother allowed herself,' she answered hastily.

'Refractory child! Your mother, after meeting me at a ball, told her father, who adored her, that same evening that she believed she could be happy with me.—Now, be candid, Modeste; is there any resemblance between love, at first sight it is true, but under a father's eye, and the mad act of writing to an unknown man?'

'An unknown man? Nay, papa, one of our greatest poets, whose character and life are under the light of day, exposed to gossip and calumny; a man clothed in glory, to whom, my dear father, I was but a dramatic, literary personage—a girl of Shakespeare's—till the moment when I felt I must know whether the man were as attractive as his soul is beautiful.'

'Bless me, my poor child, you are dreaming of poetry in connection with marriage. But if, in all ages, girls have been cloistered in the family; if God and social law have placed them under the stern yoke of paternal sanction, it is precisely and on purpose to spare them the misfortunes to which the poetry that fascinates you must lead while it dazzles you, and which you therefore cannot estimate at its true worth. Poetry is one of the graces of life; it is not the whole of life.'

'Papa, it is an action for ever undecided before the tribunal of facts, for there is a constant struggle between our hearts and the family authority.'

'Woe to the girl who should find happiness by means of such resistance!' said the Colonel gravely. 'In 1813

one of my fellow-officers, the Marquis d'Aiglemont, married his cousin against her father's warnings, and the household paid dearly for the obstinacy that a girl could mistake for love.—In these matters the family is supreme.'

'My *fiancé* has told me all that,' said she. 'He assumed the part of *Orgon* for some time, and had the courage to run down the personal character of poets.'

'I have read the correspondence,' said her father, with a meaning smile that made Modeste uneasy. 'And I may, on that point, remark that your last letter would hardly be allowable in a girl who had been seduced—in a Julie d'Étanges. Good God! what mischief comes of romances!'

'If they were never written, my dear father, we should still enact them. It is better to read them. There are fewer romantic adventures now than in the time of Louis XIV. and Louis XV., when fewer novels were published.—Besides, if you have read our letters, you must have perceived that I have found you for a son-in-law the most respectful son, the most angelic nature, the strictest honesty, and that we love each other at least as much as you and mamma did. . . . Well, I will admit that the affair has not been conducted exactly as etiquette requires. I made a mistake, if you like——'

'I have read your letters,' repeated her father, interrupting her, 'so I know how he justified you in your own eyes for a step which might perhaps be excusable in a woman who knows life, who is carried away by passion, but which in a girl of twenty is a monstrous fault——'

'A fault in common people's eyes, in those of narrow-minded Gobenheims, who measure out life with a T square! But do not let us go beyond the artistic and poetic world, papa.—We young girls live between two alternatives: we may show a man that we love him by mincing graces, or we may go to meet him frankly.

And is not this last method really great and noble? We French girls are disposed of by our family like merchandise, at three months' date, sometimes much sooner, like Mademoiselle Vilquin; but in England, Switzerland, and Germany they are married more nearly on the system I have adopted. What can you say to that? Am I not half German?'

'Child,' exclaimed the Colonel, looking at his daughter, 'the superiority of France lies precisely in the common-sense, the strict logic to which our splendid language compels the mind. France is the Reason of the world! England and Germany are romantic in this point; but even there the great families follow our customs.—You girls would rather not believe, then, that your parents, who know life, have the charge of your souls and your happiness, and that it is their duty to steer you clear of the rocks! . . . Good God!' he went on, 'is this their fault or ours? Ought we to bend our children under a yoke of iron? Must we always be punished for the tenderness which prompts us to make them happy, which, unfortunately, makes them heart of our heart!'

As she heard this ejaculation, spoken almost with tears, Modeste cast a side glance at her father.

'Is it wrong in a girl whose heart is free,' said she, 'to choose for her husband a man who is not only charming in himself, but who is also a man of genius, of good birth, and in a fine position—a gentleman as gentle as myself?'

'Then you love him?' said the Colonel.

'I tell you, father,' said she, laying her head on his breast, 'if you do not want to see me die——'

'That is enough,' said the Colonel; 'your passion is, I see, unchangeable.'

'Unchangeable.'

'Nothing could move you?'

'Nothing in the world.'

'You can conceive of no alteration, no betrayal,' her father went on. 'You love him for better, for worse, for the sake of his personal charm; and if he should be a d'Estourny, you still would love him?'

'Oh, papa, you do not know your child! Could I love a coward, a man devoid of truth and honour—a gallows-bird!'

'Then supposing you have been deceived?'

'By that charming young fellow, so candid—almost melancholy?—You are laughing at me, or you have not seen him.'

'I see; happily your love is not so imperative as you say. I have suggested conditions which might modify your poem.—Well, then, you will admit that fathers are of some use?'

'You wanted to give me a lesson, papa—a sort of object-lesson, it would seem.'

'Poor misled girl!' said her father severely; 'the lesson is not of my giving; I have nothing to do with it beyond trying to soften the blow.'

'Say no more, papa; do not trifle with my very life,' said Modeste, turning pale.

'Nay, my child, summon up your courage. It is you who have trifled with life, and life now laughs you to scorn.'

Modeste looked at her father in bewilderment.

'Listen; if the young man you love, whom you saw in church at le Havre four days ago, were a contemptible wretch——'

'It is not true!' said she. 'That pale, dark face, so noble and full of poetry——'

'Is a lie!' said the Colonel, interrupting her. 'He is no more Monsieur de Canalis than I am that fisherman hauling up his sail to go out——'

'Do you know what you are killing in me?' said Modeste.

'Be comforted, my child; though fate has made your

fault its own punishment, the mischief is not irreparable. The youth you saw, with whom you have exchanged hearts by correspondence, is an honest fellow; he came to me to confess his dilemma. He loves you, and I should not object to him as a son-in-law.'

'And if he is not Canalis, who is he?' asked Modeste, in a broken voice.

'His secretary. His name is Ernest de la Brière. He is not of superior birth, but he is one of those average men, with solid virtues and sound morals, whom parents like. And what does it matter to us, after all? You have seen him; nothing can change your feelings; you have chosen him, you know his soul—it is as noble as he is good-looking.'

The Comte de la Bastie was checked by a sigh from Modeste. The poor child, perfectly white, her eyes fixed on the sea, and as rigid as the dead, had been struck as by a pistol-shot by the words, '*One of those average men, with solid virtues and sound morals, whom parents like.*'

'Deceived!' she said at last.

'As your poor sister was, but less seriously.'

'Let us go home, papa,' she said, rising from the knoll on which they had been sitting. 'Listen, father; I swear before God to obey your wishes, whatever they may be, in the business of marriage.'

'Then you have already ceased to love?' asked her father sarcastically.

'I loved a true man without a falsehood on his face, as honest as you yourself, incapable of disguising himself like an actor, of dressing himself up in another man's glory.'

'You said that nothing could move you!' said the Colonel ironically.

'Oh, do not make game of me!' cried she, clasping her hands, and looking at her father in an agony of entreaty. 'You do not know how you are torturing my heart and my dearest beliefs by your satire——'

'God forbid! I have said the exact truth.'

'You are very good, father,' she replied, after a pause, with a certain solemnity.

'And he has your letters! Heh?' said Charles Mignon. 'If those crazy effusions of your soul had fallen into the hands of one of those poets who, according to Dumay, use them for pipe-lights——'

'Oh, that is going too far.'

'So Canalis told him.'

'He saw Canalis?'

'Yes,' replied the Colonel.

They walked on a little way in silence.

'That, then,' said Modeste, when they had gone a few steps, 'was why that gentleman spoke so ill of poets and poetry! Why did that little secretary talk of—— But, however,' she added, interrupting herself, 'were not his virtues, his qualities, his fine sentiments, a mere epistolary make-up? The man who steals another's fame and name may very well——'

'Pick locks, rob the Treasury, murder on the highway,' said Charles Mignon, smiling. 'That is just like you—you girls, with your uncompromising feelings and your ignorance of life. A man who can deceive a woman has either escaped the scaffold or must end there.'

This raillery checked Modeste's effervescence, and again they were both silent.

'My child,' the Colonel added, 'men in the world—as in nature, for that matter—are bound to try to win your hearts, and you to defend them. You have reversed the position. Is that well? In a false position everything is false. Yours, then, was the first wrong step.—No, a man is not a monster because he tries to attract a woman; our rights allow us to be the aggressors, with all the consequences, short of crime and baseness. A man may still have virtues even after throwing over a woman, for this simply means that he has failed to find

the treasure he sought in her; while no woman but a queen, an actress, or a woman so far above the man in rank that to him she is like a queen, can take the initiative without incurring much blame.—But a girl! She is false to everything that God has given her, every flower of saintliness, dignity, and sweetness, whatever grace, poetry, or precaution she may infuse into the act.'

'To seek the master and find the servant! To play the old farce of Love and Chance on one side only!' she exclaimed, with bitter feeling. 'Oh, I shall never hold up my head again!'

'Foolish child! Monsieur Ernest de la Brière is, in my eyes, at least the equal of Monsieur de Canalis; he has been private secretary to a Prime Minister, he is Referendary to the Court of Exchequer, he is a man of heart, he adores you,—but he does not write verses.—No, I confess it, he is not a poet; but he may have a heart full of poetry. However, my poor child,' he added, in reply to Modeste's face of disgust, 'you will see them both—the false and the real Canalis——'

'Oh, papa!'

'Did you not swear to obey me in everything that concerns the *business* of your marriage? Well, you may choose between them the man you prefer for your husband. You began with a poem, you may end with a page of bucolics by trying to detect the true nature of these gentlemen in some rustic excursions, a shooting or a fishing party.'

Modeste bent her head and returned to the Chalet with her father, listening to what he said, and answering in monosyllables. She had fallen humiliated into the depths of a bog, from the Alp where she fancied she had flown up to an eagle's nest. To adopt the poetical phraseology of an author of that period, 'After feeling the soles of her feet too tender to tread on the glass sherds of reality, Fancy, which had united every characteristic of woman in that fragile form, from the

day-dreams of a modest girl, all strewn with violets, to the unbridled desires of a courtesan, had now led her to the midst of her enchanted gardens, where, hideous surprise! instead of an exquisite blossom, she found growing from the soil the hairy and twisted limbs of the Mandragora.'

From the mystic heights of her love, Modeste had dropped on to the dull, flat road, lying between ditches and ploughed lands—the road, in short, that is paved with vulgarity. What girl with an ardent spirit but would be broken by such a fall? At whose feet had she cast her promises?

The Modeste who returned to the Chalet bore no more resemblance to the girl who had gone out two hours before, than the actress in the street resembles the heroine on the stage. She sank into a state of apathy that was painful to behold. The sun was darkened, nature was under a shroud, the flowers had no message for her. Like every girl of a vehement disposition, she drank a little too deep of the cup of disenchantment. She rebelled against reality, without choosing as yet to bend her neck to the yoke of the family and of society; she thought it too heavy, too hard, too oppressive. She would not even listen to the comfort offered by her father and mother, and felt an indescribable savage delight in abandoning herself to her mental sufferings.

'Then poor Butscha was right!' she exclaimed one evening.

This speech shows how far she had travelled in so short a time on the barren plains of Reality, guided by her deep dejection. Grief, when it comes of the upheaval of all our hopes, is an illness; it often ends in death. It would be no mean occupation for modern physiology to investigate the process and means by which a thought can produce the same deadly effects as a poison; how despair can destroy the appetite, injure the

pylorus, and change all the functions of the strongest vitality. This was the case with Modeste. In three days she presented an image of morbid melancholy; she sang no more, it was impossible to make her smile; her parents and friends were alarmed. Charles Mignon, uneasy at seeing nothing of the two young men, was thinking of going to fetch them; but on the fourth day Monsieur Latournelle had news of them, and this was how.

Canalis, immensely tempted by such a rich marriage, would neglect no means of outdoing La Brière, while Ernest could not complain of his having violated the laws of friendship. The poet thought that nothing put a lover at a greater disadvantage in a young lady's eyes than figuring in an inferior position; so he proposed, in the most innocent manner possible, that he and La Brière should keep house together, taking a little country place at Ingouville, where they might live for a month under pretext of recruiting their health.

As soon as La Brière had consented to this proposal, at first regarding it as very natural, Canalis insisted on his being his guest, and made all the arrangements himself. He sent his man-servant to le Havre, desiring him to apply to Monsieur Latournelle for the choice of a country cottage at Ingouville, thinking that the notary would certainly talk over the matter with the Mignon family. Ernest and Canalis, it may be supposed, had discussed every detail of their adventure; and La Brière, always prolix, had given his rival a thousand valuable hints.

The servant, understanding his master's intentions, carried them out to admiration; he trumpeted the advent of the great poet, to whom his doctors had ordered some sea-baths to recruit him after the double fatigues of politics and literature. This grand personage required a house of at least so many rooms; for he was bringing his secretary, his cook, two men-servants, and a coach-

man, not to mention Monsieur Germain Bonnet, his body-servant. The travelling carriage the poet selected and hired for a month was very neat, and could serve for making some excursions; and Germain was in search of two saddle-horses for hire in the neighbourhood, as Monsieur le Baron and his secretary were fond of horse-exercise. In the presence of little Latournelle, Germain, as he went over various houses, spoke much of the secretary, and rejected two villas on the ground that Monsieur de la Brière would not be well accommodated.

'Monsieur le Baron,' said he, 'regards his secretary as his best friend. Oh, I should catch it handsomely if Monsieur de la Brière were not as well served as Monsieur le Baron himself. And, after all, Monsieur de la Brière is Referendary to the Court of Exchequer.'

Germain was never seen dressed otherwise than in a suit of black, with good gloves and boots, turned out like a gentleman. Imagine the effect he produced, and the notion that was formed of the great poet from this specimen. A clever man's servant becomes clever too; the master's cleverness presently 'runs' and colours the man. Germain did not overact his part; he was straightforward and genial, as Canalis had instructed him to be. Poor La Brière had no suspicion of the injury Germain was doing him, or of the depreciation to which he had exposed himself; for some echoes of public report rose from the lower depths to Modeste's ears. Thus Canalis was bringing his friend in his retinue, in his carriage; and Ernest's simple nature did not allow him to perceive his false position soon enough to remedy it.

The delay which so provoked Charles Mignon was caused by the poet's desire to have his arms painted on the doors of the chaise, and by his orders to the tailor; for Canalis took in the wide world of such trivialities, of which the least may influence a girl.

'Make yourself easy,' said Latournelle to the Colonel

on the fifth day. 'Monsieur de Canalis' man came to a determination this morning. He has taken Madame Amaury's cottage at Sanvic, furnished, for seven hundred francs, and has written to his master that he can start, and will find everything ready on his arrival. So the gentlemen will be here by Sunday. I have also had this note from Butscha. Here—it is not long: "My dear Master, I cannot get back before Sunday. Between this and then I must get some important information which nearly concerns some one in whom you are interested."'

The announcement of this arrival did not make Modeste at all less sad; the sense of a fall, of humiliation, still held sway over her, and she was not such a born coquette as her father thought her. There is a charming and permissible kind of flirtation, the coquetry of the soul, which might be called the good breeding of love; and Charles Mignon, when reproving his daughter, had failed to distinguish between the desire to please and the factitious love of the mind, between the craving to love and self-interest. Just like a soldier of the Empire, he saw in the letters he had so hastily read a girl throwing herself at a poet's head; but in many letters—omitted here for the sake of brevity—a connoisseur would have admired the maidenly and graceful reserve which Modeste had immediately substituted for the aggressive and frivolous pertness of her first effusions—a transition very natural in a woman.

On one point her father had been cruelly right. It was her last letter—in which Modeste, carried away by threefold love, had spoken as though their marriage were a decided thing, which really brought her to shame. Still, she thought her father very hard, very cruel, to compel her to receive a man so unworthy of her, towards whom her soul had flown almost unveiled. She had questioned Dumay as to his interview with the poet; she had ingeniously extracted from him every detail, and

she could not think Canalis such a barbarian as the lieutenant thought him. She could smile at the fine papal chest containing the letters of the *mille et trois* ladies of this literary Don Giovanni. Again and again she was on the point of saying to her father, 'I am not the only girl who writes to him; the cream of womankind send leaves for the poet's crown of bay.'

In the course of this week Modeste's character underwent a transformation. This catastrophe—and it was a great one to so poetical a nature—aroused her latent acumen and spirit of mischief, and her suitors were to find her a formidable adversary. For, in fact, in any girl, if her heart is chilled, her head grows clear; she then observes everything with a certain swiftness of judgment and a spirit of mockery, such as Shakespeare has admirably painted in the person of Beatrice in *Much Ado about Nothing*. Modeste was seized by intense disgust of mankind, since the most distinguished of them had deceived her hopes. In love, what a woman mistakes for disgust is simply seeing clearly; but in matters of feeling no woman, especially no young girl, ever sees truly. When she ceases to admire, she contemns. So Modeste, after going through fearful tortures of mind, inevitably put on the armour on which, as she declared, she had stamped the word Contempt; thenceforward she could look on as a disinterested spectator at what she called the Farce of Suitors, although she filled the part of leading lady. More especially was she bent on pertinaciously humiliating Monsieur de la Brière.

'Modeste is saved,' said Madame Mignon to her husband with a smile. 'She means to be revenged on the false Canalis by trying to fall in love with the true one.'

This was, indeed, Modeste's plan. It was so obvious that her mother, to whom she confided her vexation, advised her to treat Monsieur de la Brière with oppressive civility.

'These two young fellows,' said Madame Latournelle on the Saturday, 'have no suspicion of the troop of spies at their heels, for here are eight of us to keep an eye on them.'

'What, my dear—two?' cried little Latournelle; 'there are three of them!—Gobenheim is not here yet, so I may speak.'

Modeste had looked up, and all the others, following her example, gazed at the notary.

'A third lover, and he is a lover, has put himself on the list——'

'Bless me!' said Charles Mignon.

'But he is no less a person,' the notary went on pompously, 'than His Lordship Monsieur le Duc d'Hérouville, Marquis de Saint-Séver, Duc de Nivron, Comte de Bayeux, Vicomte d'Essigny, High Equerry of France, and Peer of the Realm, Knight of the Orders of the Spur and of the Golden Fleece, Grandee of Spain, and son of the last Governor of Normandy.—He saw Mademoiselle Modeste when he was staying with the Vilquins, and he then only regretted—as his notary told me, who arrived yesterday from Bayeux—that she was not rich enough for him, since his father, on his return from exile, had found nothing left but his Château of Hérouville, graced by his sister's presence.—The young Duke is three-and-thirty. I am definitively charged to make overtures, Monsieur le Comte,' added Latournelle, turning respectfully to the Colonel.

'Ask Modeste,' said her father, 'whether she wishes to have another bird in her aviary; for, so far as I am concerned, I am quite willing that this fine gentleman equerry should pay his addresses to her.'

Notwithstanding the care with which Charles Mignon avoided seeing anybody, stayed in the Chalet, and never went out but with Modeste, Gobenheim, whom they could hardly cease to receive at the Chalet, had

gossiped about Dumay's wealth; for Dumay, a second father to Modeste, had said to Gobenheim when he left his service, 'I shall be my Colonel's steward, and all my money, excepting what my wife may keep, will go to my little Modeste's children.'

So every one at le Havre had echoed the plain question that Latournelle had asked himself—

'Must not Monsieur Charles Mignon have made an enormous fortune if Dumay's share amounts to six hundred thousand francs, and if Dumay is to be his steward.'

Monsieur Mignon came home in a ship of his own,' said the gossips on 'Change, 'loaded with indigo. The freight alone, not to mention the vessel, is worth more than he gives out to be his fortune.'

The Colonel would not discharge the servants he had so carefully chosen during his travels, so he was obliged to hire a house for six months in the lower part of Ingouville; he had a body-servant, a cook, and a coachman—both negroes—and a mulatto woman and two mulatto men on whose faithfulness he could rely. The coachman was inquiring for riding horses for Mademoiselle and his master, and for carriage horses for the chaise in which the Colonel and the Lieutenant had come home. This travelling carriage, purchased in Paris, was in the latest fashion, and bore the arms of La Bastie with a Count's coronet. All these things, mere trifles in the eyes of a man who had been living, for four years, in the midst of the unbounded luxury of the Indies, of the Hong merchants, and the English at Canton, were the subject of comment to the traders of le Havre and the good folks of Graville and Ingouville. Within five days there was a hubbub of talk which flashed across Normandy like a fired train of gunpowder.

'Monsieur Mignon has come home from China with millions,' was said at Rouen, 'and it would seem that he has become a Count in the course of his travels.'

'But he was Comte de la Bastie before the Revolution,' somebody remarked.

'So a Liberal, who for five-and-twenty years was known as Charles Mignon, is now called Monsieur le Comte! What are we coming to?'

Thus, in spite of the reserve of her parents and intimates, Modeste was regarded as the richest heiress in Normandy, and all eyes could now see her merits. The Duc d'Hérouville's aunt and sister, in full drawing-room assembly at Bayeux, confirmed Monsieur Charles Mignon's right to the arms and title of Count conferred on Cardinal Mignon, whose Cardinal's hat and cords were, out of gratitude, assumed in place of a crest and supporters. These ladies had caught sight of Mademoiselle de la Bastie from the Vilquins', and their solicitude for the impoverished head of the house at once scented an opportunity.

'If Mademoiselle de la Bastie is as rich as she is handsome,' said the young Duke's aunt, 'she will be the best match in the province. And she, at any rate, is of noble birth!'

The last words were a shot at the Vilquins, with whom they could not come to terms after enduring the humiliation of paying them a visit.

Such were the little events which led to the introduction of another actor in this domestic drama, contrary to all the laws of Aristotle and Horace. But the portrait and biography of this personage, so tardy in his appearance, will not detain us long, since he is of the smallest importance. Monsieur le Duc will not fill more space here than he will in history.

His Lordship Monsieur le Duc d'Hérouville, the fruit of the matrimonial autumn of the last Governor of Normandy, was born at Vienna in 1796, during the emigration. The old Marshal, who returned with the King in 1814, died in 1819 without seeing his son married, though he was Duc de Nivron; he had nothing

to leave him but the immense Château of Hérouville, with the park, some outlying ground and a farm, all painfully repurchased, and worth about fifteen thousand francs a year. Louis XVIII. gave the young Duke the post of Master of the Horse; and under Charles X. he received the allowance of twelve thousand francs a year granted to impecunious peers.

But what were twenty-seven thousand francs a year for such a family? In Paris, indeed, the young Duke had the use of the Royal carriages, and his official residence at the King's stables in the Rue Saint-Thomas du Louvre; his salary paid the expenses of the winter, and the twenty-seven thousand francs paid those of the summer in Normandy.

Though this great man was still a bachelor, the fault was less his own than that of his aunt, who was not familiar with La Fontaine's fables. Mademoiselle d'Hérouville's pretensions were stupendous, quite out of harmony with the spirit of the age; for great names without money can hardly meet with any wealthy heiresses among the high French nobility, which finds it difficult enough to enrich its sons, ruined by the equal division of property. To find an advantageous match for the young Duc d'Hérouville she should have cultivated the great financial houses, and this haughty daughter of the noble house offended them all by her cutting speeches. During the early years of the Restoration, between 1817 and 1825, while looking out for millions, Mademoiselle d'Hérouville refused Mademoiselle Mongenod, the banker's daughter, with whom Monsieur de Fontaine was content. And now, after various good matches had been marred by her pride, she had just decided that the fortune of the Nucingens had been amassed by too vile means to allow of her lending herself to Madame de Nucingen's ambitious desire to see her daughter a duchess. The King, anxious to restore the splendour of the Hérouvilles, had almost made the match

himself, and he publicly taxed Mademoiselle d'Hérouville with folly. Thus the aunt made her nephew ridiculous, and the Duke laid himself open to ridicule.

It is a fact that when the great things of humanity vanish they leave some fragments (*frusteaux*, Rabelais would call them); and the French nobility in our day shows too many fag-ends. In this long study of manners neither the clergy nor the nobility have anything to complain of. Those two great and magnificent social necessaries are well represented; but would it not be false to the proud title of Historian to be other than impartial, to fail to show here the degeneracy of the race—just as you will elsewhere find the study of an émigré, the Comte de Mortsauf (*le Lys dans la vallée*), and every noblest feature of the noble, in the Marquis d'Espard (*l'Interdiction*).

How was it that a race of brave and strong men, that the house of d'Hérouville, which gave the famous Marshal to the Royal cause, cardinals to the Church, captains to the Valois, and brave men to Louis XIV., ended in a frail creature smaller than Butscha? It is a question we may ask ourselves in many a Paris drawing-room, as we hear one of the great names of France announced, and see a little slender slip of a man come in who seems only to breathe, or a prematurely old fellow, or some eccentric being, in whom the observer seeks, but scarcely finds, a feature in which imagination can see a trace of original greatness. The dissipations of the reign of Louis XV., the orgies of that selfish time, have produced the etiolated generation in which fine manners are the sole survivors of extinct great qualities. Style is the only inheritance preserved by the nobility. Thus, apart from certain exceptions, the defection which left Louis XVI. to perish may be to some extent explained by the miserable heritage of the reign of Madame de Pompadour.

The Master of the Horse, a young man with blue eyes,

fair, pale, and slight, had a certain dignity of mind; but his small size, and his aunt's mistake in having led him to be uselessly civil to the Vilquins, made him excessively shy. The d'Hérouvilles had had a narrow escape of dying out in the person of a cripple (*l'Enfant maudit*). But the Grand Marshal—as the family always called the d'Hérouville whom Louis XIII. had created Duke—had married at the age of eighty-two, and, of course, the family had been continued. The young Duke liked women; but he placed them too high, he respected them too much, he adored them, and was not at his ease but with those whom no one respects. This character had led to his living a twofold life. He avenged himself on women of easy life for the worship he paid in the drawing-rooms, or, if you like, the boudoirs, of Saint-Germain. His ways and his tiny figure, his weary face, his blue eyes, with their somewhat ecstatic expression, had added to the ridicule poured on him, most unjustly, for he was full of apprehensiveness and wit; but his wit had no sparkle, and was never seen excepting when he was quite at his ease. Fanny Beaupré, the actress, who was supposed to be his highly paid and most intimate friend, used to say of him, 'It is good wine, but so tightly corked up that you break your corkscrews.'

The handsome Duchesse de Maufrigneuse, whom the Master of the Horse could only adore, crushed him by a speech which, unluckily, was repeated, as all clever but ill-natured speeches are.

'He reminds me,' said she, 'of a trinket, beautifully wrought, but which we show more than we use, and always keep in cotton wool.'

Even his title of Master of the Horse would, by force of contrast, make good King Charles X. laugh, though the Duc d'Hérouville was a capital horseman. Men, like books, are sometimes valued too late. Modeste had had a glimpse of the Duke during his fruitless visit to the

Vilquins, and as he went by, all these remarks involuntarily recurred to her mind; but in the position in which she now stood, she perceived how valuable the Duc d'Hérouville's suit would be to save her from being at the mercy of a Canalis.

'I do not see,' said she to Latournelle, 'why the Duc d'Hérouville should not be allowed to call. In spite of our indigence,' she added, with a mischievous glance at her father, 'I am supposed to be an heiress. I shall have at last to publish a card of the field.—Have you not noticed how Gobenheim's looks have changed in the course of this week? He is in despair because he cannot set down his faithful attendance for whist to the score of mute admiration of me!'

'Hush, my darling! here he is,' said Madame Latournelle.

'Old Althor is in despair,' said Gobenheim to Monsieur Mignon as he came in.

'What about?' asked the Comte de la Bastie.

'Vilquin is going to fail, they say, and on 'Change here you are said to have several millions——'

'No one knows,' said Charles Mignon very drily, 'what my obligations in India may amount to, and I do not care to admit the public to my confidence in business matters.—Dumay,' he added in his friend's ear, 'if Vilquin is in difficulties, we may be able to get the place back for what he gave for it in ready money.'

Such was the state of affairs brought about by chance when, on Sunday morning, Canalis and La Brière, preceded by a courier, arrived at Madame Amaury's villa. They were told that the Duc d'Hérouville and his sister had arrived on the previous Tuesday at a hired house in Graville, for the benefit of their health. This competition led to a jest in the town that rents would rise at Ingouville.

'She will make the place a perfect hospital if this goes

on!' remarked Mademoiselle Vilquin, disgusted at not becoming a duchess.

The perennial comedy of *The Heiress*, now to be performed at the Chalet, might certainly, from the frame of mind in which it found Modeste, have been, as she had said in jest, a competition, for she was firmly resolved, after the overthrow of her illusions, to give her hand only to the man whose character should prove perfectly satisfactory.

On the morrow of their arrival, the rivals—still bosom friends—prepared to make their first visit to the Chalet that evening. They devoted the whole of Sunday and all Monday morning to unpacking, to taking possession of Madame Amaury's house, and to settling themselves in it for a month. Besides, the poet, justified by his position as Minister's apprentice in allowing himself some craft, had thought of everything; he wished to get the benefit of the excitement that might be caused by his arrival, of which some echoes might reach the Chalet. Canalis, supposed to be much fatigued, did not go out; La Brière went twice to walk past the Chalet, for he loved with a sort of desperation, he had the greatest dread of having repelled Modeste, his future seemed wrapped in thick clouds.

The two friends came down to dinner on that Monday in array for their first visit, the most important of all. La Brière was dressed as he had been in church on that famous Sunday; but he regarded himself as the satellite to a planet, and trusted wholly to the chance of circumstances. Canalis, on his part, had not forgotten his black coat, nor his orders, nor the drawing-room grace perfected by his intimacy with the Duchesse de Chaulieu, his patroness, and with the finest company of the Faubourg Saint-Germain. Canalis had attended to every detail of dandyism, while poor Ernest was prepared to appear in the comparative carelessness of a hopeless man.

As he waited on the two gentlemen at table, Germain could not help smiling at the contrast. At the second course he came in with a diplomatic, or, to be exact, a disturbed air.

'Monsieur le Baron,' said he to Canalis in a low voice, 'did you know that Monsieur the Master of the Horse is coming to Graville to be cured of the same complaint as you and Monsieur de la Brière?'

'The little Duc d'Hérouville?' cried Canalis.

'Yes, sir.'

'Can he have come for Mademoiselle de la Bastie?' asked La Brière, colouring.

'For Mademoiselle Mignon,' replied Germain.

'We are done!' cried Canalis, looking at La Brière.

'Ah!' Ernest eagerly replied, 'that is the first time you have said *we* since we left Paris. Till this moment you have said *I*.'

'You know me!' cried Melchior with a burst of laughter. 'Well, we are not in a position to hold our own against an officer of the Household, against the titles of Duke and Peer, nor against the marsh-lands which the Privy Council has just conferred, on the strength of my report, on the House of Hérouville.'

'His Highness,' said La Brière with mischievous gravity, 'offers you a plum of consolation in the person of his sister.'

Just at this moment the Comte de la Bastie was announced. The two young men rose to receive him, and La Brière hastened to meet him and introduce Canalis.

'I had to return the visit you paid me in Paris,' said Charles Mignon to the young Referendary, 'and I knew that by coming here I should have the added pleasure of seeing one of our great living poets.'

'Great?—Monsieur,' the poet replied with a smile; 'there can be nothing great henceforth in an age to which the reign of Napoleon was the preface. To

begin with, we are a perfect tribe of so-called great poets. And besides, second-rate talent apes genius so well that it has made any great distinction impossible.'

'And is that what has driven you into politics?' asked the Comte de la Bastie.

'It is the same in that field too,' said Canalis. 'There will be no more great statesmen; there will be only men who are more or less in touch with events. Under the system produced by the Charter, Monsieur, which regards the schedule of the rates you pay as a patent of nobility, there is nothing substantial but what you went to find in China—a fortune.'

Melchior, well pleased with himself, and satisfied with the impression he was making on his future father-in-law, now turned to Germain.

'Give us coffee in the drawing-room,' said he, bowing to the merchant to leave the dining-room.

'I must thank you, Monsieur le Comte,' said La Brière, 'for having spared me the embarrassment of not knowing how I might introduce my friend at your house. To your kind heart you add a happy wit——'

'Oh, such wit as is common to the natives of Provence,' said Mignon.

'Ah, you come from Provence?' cried Canalis.

'Forgive my friend,' said La Brière; 'he has not studied the history of the La Basties, as I have.'

At the word friend, Canalis shot a deep look at Ernest.

'If your health permits,' said the Provençal to the great poet, 'I claim the honour of receiving you this evening under my roof. It will be a day to mark, as the ancients have it, *albo notanda lapillo*. Though we are somewhat shy of receiving so great a glory in so small a house, you will gratify my daughter's impatience, for her admiration has led her even to set your verses to music.'

'You possess what is better than glory,' said Canalis. 'You have beauty in your home, if I may believe Ernest.'

'Oh, she is a good girl, whom you will find quite provincial,' said the father.

'Provincial as she is, she has a suitor in the Duc d'Hérouville,' cried Canalis in a hard tone.

'Oh,' said Monsieur Mignon, with the deceptive frankness of a southerner, 'I leave my daughter free to choose. Dukes, princes, private gentlemen, they are all the same to me, even men of genius. I will pledge myself to nothing; the man my Modeste may prefer will be my son-in-law, or rather my son,' and he looked at La Brière. 'Madame de la Bastie is a German; she cannot tolerate French etiquette, and I allow myself to be guided by my two women. I would always rather ride inside a carriage than on the box. We can discuss such serious matters in jest, for we have not yet seen the Duc d'Hérouville, and I do not believe in marriages arranged by proxy any more than in suitors forced on girls by their parents.'

'That is a declaration equally disheartening and encouraging to two young men who seek in marriage the philosopher's stone of happiness,' said Canalis.

'Do not you think it desirable, necessary, and indeed good policy, to stipulate for perfect liberty for the parents, the daughter, and the suitors?' said Charles Mignon.

Canalis, at a glance from La Brière, made no reply, and the conversation continued on indifferent subjects. After walking two or three times round the garden, the father withdrew, begging the two friends to pay their visit.

'That is our dismissal,' cried Canalis. 'You understood it as I did. After all, in his place I should not hesitate between the Master of the Horse and either of us, charming fellows as we may be.'

'I do not think so,' said La Brière. 'I believe that the worthy officer came simply to gratify his own impatience to see you, and to declare his neutrality while opening his house to us. Modeste, bewitched by your fame, and

misled as to my identity, finds herself between Poetry and hard Fact. It is my misfortune to be the hard Fact.'

'Germain,' said Canalis to the servant who came in to clear away the coffee, 'order the carriage round. We will go out in half an hour, and take a drive before going to the Chalet.'

The two young men were equally impatient to see Modeste, but La Brière dreaded the meeting, while Canalis looked forward to it with a confidence inspired by conceit. Ernest's impulsive advances to her father, and the flattery by which he had soothed the merchant's aristocratic pride while showing up the poet's awkwardness, made Canalis determine that he would play a part. He resolved that he would display all his powers of attraction, but at the same time affect indifference, seem to disdain Modeste, and so goad the girl's vanity. A disciple of the beautiful Duchesse de Chaulieu, he here showed himself worthy of his reputation as a man who knew women well; though he did not really know them, since no man does who is the happy victim of an exclusive passion. While the luckless Ernest, sunk in a corner of the carriage, was crushed by the terrors of true love and the anticipated wrath, scorn, contempt—all the lightnings of an offended and disappointed girl—and kept gloomy silence, Canalis, not less silent, was preparing himself, like an actor studying an important part in a new play.

Neither of them certainly looked like a happy man.

For Canalis, indeed, the matter was serious. To him the mere fancy for marrying involved the breach of the serious friendship which had bound him for nearly ten years to the Duchesse de Chaulieu. Though he had screened his journey under the common excuse of overwork—in which no woman ever believes, even if it is true—his conscience troubled him somewhat; but to La Brière the word Conscience seemed so Jesuitical that he

only shrugged his shoulders when the poet spoke of his scruples.

'Your conscience, my boy, seems to me to mean simply your fear of losing the gratifications of vanity, some solid advantages, and a pleasant habit in sacrificing Madame de Chaulieu's affection; for, if you are successful with Modeste, you will certainly have nothing to regret in the aftermath of a passion so constantly reaped during these eight years past. If you tell me that you are afraid of offending your protectress, should she learn the real reason of your visit here, I can easily believe you. To throw over the Duchess and fail at the Chalet is staking too much! And you mistake the distress of this alternative for remorse!'

'You know nothing about sentiment!' cried Canalis, nettled, as a man always is when he asks for a compliment and hears the truth.

'That is just what a bigamist would say to a dozen jurymen,' said La Brière, laughing.

This epigram made a yet more disagreeable impression on Canalis; he thought La Brière much too clever and too free for a secretary.

The arrival of a handsome carriage, with a coachman in Canalis' livery, made all the greater sensation at the Chalet, because the two gentlemen were expected, and all the persons of this tale, excepting only the Duke and Butscha, were assembled there.

'Which is the poet?' asked Madame Latournelle of Dumay, as they stood in the window-bay, where she had posted herself on hearing the carriage-wheels.

'The one who marches like a drum-major,' replied the cashier.

'Ah, hah!' said the lady, studying Melchior, who strutted like a man on whom the world has its eye.

Though rather severe, Dumay's judgment—a simple soul, if ever man was—had hit the mark. Canalis was, morally speaking, a sort of Narcissus; this

was the fault of the great lady who flattered him immensely, and spoilt him as women older than their adorers always will flatter and spoil men. A woman past her first youth, who means to attach a man permanently, begins by glorifying his faults, so as to make all rivalry impossible; for her rival cannot at once be in the secret of that subtle flattery to which a man so easily becomes accustomed. Coxcombs are the product of this feminine industry, when they are not coxcombs by nature.

Hence Canalis, caught young by the beautiful Duchess, justified himself for his airs and graces by telling himself that they pleased a woman whose taste was law. Subtle as these shades of feeling are, it is not impossible to render them. Thus Melchior had a real talent for reading aloud, which had been much admired, and too flattering praise had led him into an exaggerated manner, which neither poet nor actor can set bounds to, and which made de Marsay say—always de Marsay—that he did not declaim, but brayed out his verses, so fully would he mouth the vowels as he listened to himself. To use the slang of the stage, he pumped himself out, and made too long pauses. He would examine his audience with a knowing look, and give himself self-satisfied airs, with the aids to emphasis of 'sawing the air' and 'windmill action'—picturesque phrases, as the catchwords of Art always are. Canalis indeed had imitators, and was the head of a school in this style. This melodramatic emphasis had slightly infected his conversation and given it a declamatory tone, as will have been seen in his interview with Dumay. When once the mind has become foppish, manners show the influence. Canalis had come at last to a sort of rhythmic gait, he invented attitudes, stole looks at himself in the glass, and made his language harmonise with the position he assumed. He thought so much of the effect to be produced, that more than once Blondet, a mocking spirit,

had bet he would pull him up short—and had done it—merely by fixing a set gaze on the poet's hair, or boots, or the tail of his coat.

At the end of ten years these antics, which at first had passed under favour of youthful exuberance, had grown stale, and all the more so as Melchior himself seemed somewhat worn. Fashionable life is as fatiguing for men as for women, and perhaps the Duchess's twenty years' seniority weighed on Canalis more than on her; for the world saw her still handsome, without a wrinkle, without rouge, and without heart. Alas! neither men nor women have a friend to warn them at the moment when the fragrance of modesty turns rancid, when a caressing look is like a theatrical trick, when the expressiveness of a face becomes a grimace, when the mechanism of their liveliness shows its rusty skeleton. Genius alone can renew its youth like the serpent, and in grace, as in all else, only the heart never grows stale. Persons of genuine feeling are single-hearted. Now in Canalis, as we know, the heart was dry. He wasted the beauty of his gaze by assuming at inappropriate moments the intensity that deep thought gives to the eyes.

And, then, praise to him was an article of exchange, in which he wanted to have all the advantage. His way of paying compliments, which charmed superficial persons, to those of more refined taste might seem insultingly commonplace, and the readiness of his flattery betrayed a set purpose. In fact, Melchior lied like a courtier. To the Duc de Chaulieu, who had proved an ineffective speaker when, as Minister for Foreign Affairs, he had been obliged to mount the Tribune, Canalis had unblushingly said, 'Your Excellency was sublime!'

Many men like Canalis might have had their affectations eradicated by failure administered in small doses. Trifling, indeed, as such faults are in the gilded drawing-rooms of the Faubourg Saint-Germain—where every one

contributes a quota of absurdities, and this kind of audacity, artificiality, inflation if you will, has a background of excessive luxury and magnificent dress which is perhaps an excuse for it—they are monstrously conspicuous in the depths of the country, where what is thought ridiculous is the very opposite of all this. Canalis, indeed, at once pompous and mannered, could not now metamorphose himself; he had had time to set in the mould into which the Duchess had cast him, and he was, moreover, very Parisian, or, if you prefer it, very French. The Parisian is amazed that everything, everywhere, is not what it is in Paris, and the Frenchman that it is not what it is in France. Good taste consists in accommodating oneself to the manners of other places without losing too much of one's native character, as Alcibiades did—the model of a gentleman. True grace is elastic. It yields to every circumstance, it is in harmony with every social atmosphere, it knows how to walk in the street in a cheap dress, remarkable only for its fitness, instead of parading the feathers and gaudy hues which some vulgar people flaunt.

Now, Canalis, influenced by a woman who loved him for her own sake rather than for his, wanted to be himself a law, and to remain what he was wherever he might go. He believed that he carried his private public with him—a mistake shared by some other great men in Paris.

While the poet made a studied entrance into the little drawing-room, La Brière sneaked in like a dog that is afraid of being beaten.

'Ah, here is my soldier!' said Canalis, on seeing Dumay, after paying Madame Mignon his respects, and bowing to the other women. 'Your anxieties are relieved, I hope?' he went on, offering him his hand with a flourish. 'But the sight of Mademoiselle sufficiently explains their gravity. I spoke only of earthly beings, not of angels.'

The hearers by their expression asked for a clue to this riddle.

'Yes, I shall regard it as a triumph,' the poet went on, understanding that everybody wanted an explanation, 'that I succeeded in alarming one of those men of iron whom Napoleon succeeded in finding to form the piles on which he tried to found an empire too vast to be permanent. Only time can serve to cement such a structure! — But have I any right to boast of my triumph? I had nothing to do with it; it was the triumph of fancy over fact. Your battles, dear Monsieur Dumay; your heroic cavalry charges, Monsieur le Comte; in short, War, was the form assumed by Napoleon's thoughts. And of all these things what remains? The grass that grows over them knows nothing of them, nor will harvests mark the spot; but for history, but for writing, the future might know nothing of this heroic age! Thus your fifteen years of struggle are no more than ideas, and that is what will save the Empire; poets will make a poem of it. A land that can win such battles ought to be able to sing them!'

Canalis paused to collect, by a sweeping glance at their faces, the tribute of admiration due to him from these country folks.

'You cannot doubt, Monsieur,' said Madame Mignon, 'how much I regret being unable to see you, from the way you indemnify me by the pleasure I feel in listening to you.'

Modeste, dressed as she had been on the day when this story opens, having made up her mind to think Canalis sublime, sat speechless, and dropped her embroidery, which hung from her fingers at the end of the needleful of cotton.

'Modeste, this is Monsieur de la Brière.—Monsieur Ernest—my daughter,' said Charles Mignon, thinking that the secretary was thrown rather too much into the background.

The young lady bowed coldly to Ernest, giving him a look intended to convey to the whole party that she had never seen him before.

'I beg your pardon,' said she, without a blush, 'the fervent admiration I profess for our greatest poet is, in my friends' eyes, a sufficient excuse for my having seen no one else.'

The clear young voice, with a ring in it like the famous tones of Mademoiselle Mars, enchanted the poor Referendary, already dazzled by Modeste's beauty, and in his amazement he spoke a few words which, had they been true, would have been sublime—

'But he is my friend,' said he.

'Then you will have forgiven me,' she replied.

'He is more than a friend,' cried Canalis, taking Ernest by the shoulder, and leaning on him as Alexander leaned on Hephaestion. 'We love each other like two brothers——'

Madame Latournelle cut the poet short in the middle of his speech by saying to her husband—

'Surely Monsieur is the gentleman we saw in church?'

'Why not?' said Charles Mignon, seeing Ernest colour.

Modeste gave no sign, but took up her work again.

'You may be right; I have been twice to le Havre,' said La Brière, sitting down by the side of Dumay.

Canalis, bewildered by Modeste's beauty, misunderstood the admiration she expressed, and flattered himself that his efforts had been perfectly successful.

'I should think a man of genius devoid of heart if he had not about him some attached friend,' said Modeste, to revive the subject interrupted by Madame Latournelle's awkwardness.

'Mademoiselle, Ernest's devotion is enough to make me believe that I am good for something,' said Canalis. 'For my dear Pylades is full of talent; he was quite half of the greatest Minister we have had since the Peace. Though he fills a distinguished position, he consents to

be my tutor in politics. He teaches me business, he feeds me with his experience, while he might aspire to the highest office. Oh! he is much superior to me——'

At a gesture from Modeste, Melchior added gracefully—

'The poetry I write he bears in his heart; and if I dare speak so to his face, it is because he is as diffident as a nun.'

'Come, come, that will do,' said La Brière, who did not know how to look. 'My dear fellow, you might be a mother wanting to get her daughter married.'

'How can you think, Monsieur, of becoming a politician?' said Charles Mignon to Canalis.

'For a poet it is abdication!' said Modeste. 'Politics are the stand-by of men without imagination.'

'Nay, Mademoiselle, in these days the Tribune is the grandest stage in the world; it has taken the place of the lists of chivalry; it will be the meeting-place of every kind of intellect, as of old the army was of every form of courage.'

Canalis had mounted his war-horse; for ten minutes he declaimed on the subject of political life:—Poetry was the preface to a statesman. In these days the orator's province was lofty generalisation; he was the pastor of ideas. If a poet could show his countrymen the road of the future, did he cease to be himself? He quoted Chateaubriand, asserting that he would some day be more important on his political than on his literary side. The French Chambers would be the guiding light of humanity. Contests by words henceforth had taken the place of fighting on the battlefield. Such or such a sitting had been a second Austerlitz, and the speakers had risen to the dignity of generals; they spent as much of their life, courage, and strength, they wore themselves out as much as generals in war. Was not speech almost the most exhausting expenditure of vital power that man could indulge in, etc., etc.

This long harangue, made up of modern commonplace, but clothed in high-sounding phrases, newly-coined words, and intended to prove that the Baron de Canalis must some day be one of the glories of the Tribune, made a deep impression on the notary, on Gobenheim, on Madame Latournelle, and Madame Mignon. Modeste felt as if she were at the play and fired with enthusiasm for the actor, exactly as Ernest was in her presence; for though the secretary knew all these fine phrases by heart, he was listening to them by the light of the girl's eyes, and falling in love to the verge of madness. To this genuine lover Modeste had eclipsed all the different Modestes he had pictured to himself when reading or answering her letters.

This visit, of which Canalis had fixed the limits beforehand, for he would not give his admirers time to get tired of him, ended by an invitation to dinner on the following Monday.

'We shall no longer be at the Chalet,' said the Comte de la Bastie; 'it is Dumay's home once more. I am going back to my old house by an agreement for six months, with the right of redemption, which I have just signed with Monsieur Vilquin in my friend Latournelle's office.'

'I only hope,' said Dumay, 'that Vilquin may not be in a position to repay the sum you have lent him on it.'

'You will be in a home suitable to your fortune,' said Canalis.

'To the fortune I am supposed to have,' Charles Mignon put in.

'It would be a pity,' said the poet, with a charming bow to Modeste, 'that this Madonna should lack a frame worthy of her divine perfections.'

This was all that Canalis said about Modeste, for he had affected not to look at her, and to behave like a man who is not at liberty to think of marriage.

'Oh, my dear Madame Mignon, he is immensely

clever!' exclaimed the notary's wife, when the gravel was heard crunching under the Parisians' feet.

'Is he rich? that is the question,' said Gobenheim.

Modeste stood at the window, not missing a single gesture of the great poet's, and never casting a glance on Ernest de la Brière. When Monsieur Mignon came into the room again, and Modeste, after receiving a parting bow from the two young men as the carriage turned, had resumed her seat, a deep discussion ensued, such as country people indulge in on Paris visitors after a first meeting. Gobenheim reiterated his remark, 'Is he rich?' in reply to the trio of praise sung by Madame Latournelle, Modeste, and her mother.

'Rich?' retorted Modeste. 'What can it matter? Cannot you see that Monsieur de Canalis is a man destined to fill the highest posts in the Government? He has more than wealth; he has the means of acquiring wealth!'

'He will be an Ambassador or a Minister,' said Monsieur Mignon.

'The taxpayers may have to pay for his funeral nevertheless,' said little Latournelle.

'Why?' asked Charles Mignon.

'He strikes me as being a man to squander all the fortunes which Mademoiselle Modeste so liberally credits him with the power of earning.'

'How can Modeste help being liberal to a man who regards her as a Madonna?' said Dumay, faithful to the aversion Canalis had roused in him.

Gobenheim was preparing the whist-table, with all the more eagerness because since Monsieur Mignon's return Latournelle and Dumay had allowed themselves to play for ten sous a point.

'Now, my little darling,' said the father to his daughter in the window recess, 'you must own that papa thinks of everything. In a week, if you send orders this evening to the dressmaker you used to employ in Paris and to

your other tradesmen, you may display yourself in all the magnificence of an heiress, while I take time to settle into our old house. You shall have a nice pony, so take care to have a habit made—the Master of the Horse deserves that little attention.'

'All the more so as we must show our friends the country,' said Modeste, whose cheeks were recovering the hues of health.

'The secretary,' observed Madame Mignon, 'is not much to speak of.'

'He is a little simpleton,' said Madame Latournelle. 'The poet was attentive to everybody. He remembered to thank Latournelle for finding him a house, by saying to me that he seemed to have consulted a lady's taste. And the other stood there as gloomy as a Spaniard, staring hard, looking as if he could swallow Modeste. If he had looked at me so, I should have been frightened.'

'He has a very pleasant voice,' Madame Mignon observed.

'He must have come to le Havre to make inquiries about the house of Mignon for the poet's benefit,' said Modeste, with a sly look at her father. 'He is certainly the man we saw in church.'

Madame Dumay and the Latournelles accepted this explanation of Ernest's former journey.

'I tell you what, Ernest,' said Canalis when they had gone twenty yards, 'I see no one in the Paris world, not a single girl to marry, that can compare with this adorable creature!'

'Oh! it is all settled,' replied La Brière, with concentrated bitterness; 'she loves you—or, if you choose, she will love you. Your fame half won the battle. In short, you have only to command. You can go there alone next time; Modeste has the deepest contempt for me, and she is right; but I do not see why I should

condemn myself to the torture of going to admire, desire, and adore what I never can possess.'

After a few condoling speeches, in which Canalis betrayed his satisfaction at having produced a new edition of Cæsar's famous motto, he hinted at his wish to be 'off' with the Duchesse de Chaulieu. La Brière, who could not endure the conversation, made an excuse of the loveliness of a rather doubtful night to get out and walk; he flew like a madman to the cliffs, where he stayed till half-past ten, given up to a sort of frenzy, sometimes walking at a great pace and spouting soliloquies, sometimes standing still or sitting down, without observing the uneasiness he was giving to two coastguards on the look-out. After falling in love with Modeste's mental culture and aggressive candour, he now added his adoration of her beauty, that is to say, an unreasoning and inexplicable passion, to all the other causes that had brought him ten days ago to church at le Havre.

Then he wandered back to the Chalet, where the Pyrenean dogs barked at him so furiously that he could not allow himself the happiness of gazing at Modeste's windows. In love, all these things are of no more account than the under-painting covered by the final touches is to the painter; but they are nevertheless the whole of love, as concealed painstaking is the whole of art: the outcome is a great painter and a perfect lover, which the public and the woman worship at last—often too late.

'Well!' cried he aloud, 'I will stay, I will endure. I shall see her and love her selfishly, for my own joy! Modeste will be my sun, my life, I shall breathe by her breath, I shall rejoice in her joys, I shall pine over her sorrows, even if she should be the wife of that egoist Canalis——'

'That is something like love, Monsieur!' said a voice proceeding from a bush by the wayside. 'Bless me! is everybody in love with Mademoiselle de la Bastie?'

Butscha started forth and gazed at La Brière. Ernest sheathed his wrath as he looked at the dwarf in the moonlight, and walked on a few steps without replying.

'Two soldiers serving in the same company should be on better terms than that,' said Butscha. 'If you are not in love with Canalis, I am not very sweet on him myself.'

'He is my friend,' said Ernest.

'Oh! then you are the little secretary?' replied the hunchback.

'I would have you to know, Monsieur,' said La Brière, 'that I am no man's secretary. I have the honour to call myself councillor to one of the High Courts of Justice of this realm.'

'I have the honour, then, of making my bow to Monsieur de la Brière,' said Butscha. 'I have the honour to call myself head clerk to Maître Latournelle, the first notary in le Havre, and I certainly am better off than you are.—Yes—for I have had the happiness of seeing Mademoiselle Modeste de la Bastie almost every afternoon for the last four years, and I propose to live within her ken as one of the King's household lives at the Tuileries. If I were offered the throne of Russia, I should reply, "I like the sun too well!"—Is not that as much as to say, Monsieur, that I care more for her than for myself—with all respect and honour? And do you suppose that the high and mighty Duchesse de Chaulieu will look with a friendly eye on the happiness of Madame de Canalis, when her maid, who is in love with Monsieur Germain, and is already uneasy at that fascinating valet's long absence at le Havre, as she dresses her mistress's hair complains . . .'

'How do you know all this?' said La Brière, interrupting him.

'In the first place, I am a notary's clerk,' replied Butscha. 'And have you not observed that I have a hump? It is full of ingenuity, Monsieur. I made

myself cousin to Mademoiselle Philoxène Jacmin, of Honfleur, where my mother was born, also a Jacmin—there are eleven branches of Jacmins at Honfleur.—And so my fair cousin, tempted by the hope of a highly improbable legacy, told me a good many things.'

'And the Duchess is vindictive?' said La Brière.

'As vengeful as a queen, said Philoxène. She has not yet forgiven the Duke for being only her husband,' replied Butscha. 'She hates as she loves. I am thoroughly informed as to her temper, her dress, her tastes, her religion, and her meannesses, for Philoxène stripped her soul and body. I went to the Opera to see Madame de Chaulieu, and I do not regret my ten francs—I am not thinking of the piece. If my hypothetical cousin had not told me that her mistress had seen fifty springs, I should have thought it lavish to give her thirty; she has known no winter, my lady the Duchess!'

'True,' said La Brière, 'she is a cameo preserved by the onyx.—Canalis would be in great difficulties if the Duchess knew of his plans; and I hope, Monsieur, that you will go no further in an espionage so unworthy of an honest man.'

'Monsieur,' said Butscha proudly, 'to me Modeste is the State. I do not spy, I forestall! The Duchesse de Chaulieu will come here if necessary, or will remain quietly where she is if I think it advisable.'

'You?'

'I.'

'And by what means?' asked La Brière.

'Ah, that is the question,' said the little hunchback. He plucked a blade of grass. 'This little plant imagines that man builds palaces for its accommodation, and one day it dislodges the most firmly cemented marble, just as the populace, having found a foothold in the structure of the feudal system, overthrew it. The power of the weakest that can creep in everywhere is greater than that of the strong man who relies on his cannon. There

are three of us, a Swiss league, who have sworn that Modeste shall be happy, and who would sell our honour for her sake.—Good night, Monsieur. If you love Mademoiselle de la Bastie, forget this conversation, and give me your hand to shake, for you seem to me to have a heart!—I was pining to see the Chalet; I got here just as she put out her candle. I saw you when the dogs gave tongue, I heard you raging; and so I took the liberty of telling you that we serve under the same colours, in the regiment of loyal devotion!'

'Good,' replied La Brière, pressing the hunchback's hand. 'Then be kind enough to tell me whether Mademoiselle Modeste ever fell in love with a man before her secret correspondence with Canalis?'

'Oh!' cried Butscha, 'the mere question is an insult!—And even now who knows whether she is in love? Does she herself know? She has rushed into enthusiasm for the mind, the genius, the spirit of this verse-monger, this vendor of literary pinchbeck; but she will study him—we shall all study him; I will find some means of making his true character peep out from beneath the carapace of the well-mannered man, and we shall see the insignificant head of his ambition and his vanity,' said Butscha, rubbing his hands. 'Now unless Mademoiselle is mad enough to die of it——'

'Oh, she sat entranced before him as if he were a miracle!' cried La Brière, revealing the secret of his jealousy.

'If he is really a good fellow, and loyal, and loves her, if he is worthy of her,' Butscha went on, 'if he gives up his Duchess, it is the Duchess I will spread a net for!—There, my dear sir, follow that path, and you will be at home in ten minutes.'

But Butscha presently turned back and called to the hapless Ernest, who, as an ardent lover, would have stayed all night to talk of Modeste.

'Monsieur,' said Butscha, 'I have not yet had the

honour of seeing our great poet; I am anxious to study that splendid phenomenon in the exercise of his functions; do me the kindness to come and spend the evening at the Chalet the day after to-morrow; and stay some time, for a man does not completely betray himself in an hour. I shall know, before any one, if he loves, or ever will love, or ever could love Mademoiselle Modeste.'

'You are very young to——'

'To be a professor!' said Butscha, interrupting La Brière. 'Ah, Monsieur, the deformed come into the world a hundred years old. Besides, a sick man, you see, when he has been ill a long time, becomes more knowing than his doctor; he understands the ways of the disease, which is more than a conscientious doctor always does. Well, in the same way, a man who loves a woman while the woman cannot help scorning him for his ugliness or his misshapen person, is at last so qualified in love that he could pass as a seducer, as the sick man at last recovers his health. Folly alone is incurable.—Since the age of six, and I am now five-and-twenty, I have had neither father nor mother; public charity has been my mother, and the King's commissioner my father.—Nay, do not be distressed,' he said, in reply to Ernest's expression, 'I am less miserable than my position—— Well, since I was six years old, when the insolent eyes of a servant of Madame Latournelle's told me that I had no right to wish to love, I have loved and have studied women. I began with ugly ones—it is well to take the bull by the horns. So I took for the first subject of my studies Madame Latournelle herself, who has been really angelic to me. I was perhaps wrong; however, so it was. I distilled her in my alembic, and I at last discovered hidden in a corner of her soul this idea, "I am not as ugly as people think!"—And in spite of her deep piety, by working on that idea, I could have led her to the brink of the abyss—to leave her there.'

'And have you studied Modeste?'

'I thought I had told you,' replied the hunchback, 'that my life is hers, as France is the King's! Now do you understand my playing the spy in Paris? I alone know all the nobleness and pride, the unselfishness, and unexpected sweetness that lie in the heart and soul of that adorable creature—the indefatigable kindness, the true piety, the light-heartedness, information, refinement, affability——'

Butscha drew out his handkerchief to stop two tears from falling, and La Brière held his hand for some time.

'I shall live in her radiance! It comes from her, and it ends in me, that is how we are united, somewhat as nature is to God by light and the word.—Good night, Monsieur, I never chattered so much in my life; but seeing you below her windows, I guessed that you loved her in my way.'

Butscha, without waiting for an answer, left the unhappy lover, on whose heart this conversation had shed a mysterious balm. Ernest determined to make Butscha his friend, never suspecting that the clerk's loquacity was chiefly intended to open communications with Canalis' house. In what a flow and ebb of thoughts, resolutions, and schemes was Ernest lapped before falling asleep; and his friend Canalis was sleeping the sleep of the triumphant, the sweetest slumber there is next to that of the just.

At breakfast the friends agreed to go together to spend the evening of the following day at the Chalet, and be initiated into the mild joys of provincial whist. To get rid of this day they ordered out the horses, both warranted to ride and drive, and ventured forth into a country certainly as unknown to them as China; for the least known thing in France to a Frenchman, is France.

As he reflected on his position as a lover rejected and scorned, the secretary made somewhat such a study of himself as he had been led to make by the question Modeste had put to him at the beginning of their

correspondence. Though misfortune is supposed to develop virtues, it only does so in virtuous people; for this sort of cleaning up of the conscience takes place only in naturally cleanly persons. La Brière determined to swallow his griefs with Spartan philosophy, to preserve his dignity, and never allow himself to be betrayed into a mean action; while Canalis, fascinated by such an enormous fortune, vowed to himself that he would neglect nothing that might captivate Modeste. Egoism and unselfishness, the watchwords of these two natures, brought them by a moral law, which sometimes has whimsical results, to behave in opposition to their characters. The selfish man meant to act self-sacrifice, the man who was all kindliness would take refuge on the Aventine Hill of pride. This phenomenon may also be seen in politics. Men often turn their natures inside out, and not unfrequently the public do not know the right side from the wrong.

After dinner they heard from Germain that the Master of the Horse had arrived; he was introduced at the Chalet that evening by Monsieur Latournelle. Mademoiselle d'Hérouville managed to offend the worthy lawyer at once, by sending a message through a footman, desiring him to call at her house, instead of simply sending her nephew to take up the lawyer, who would certainly have talked till his dying day of the visit paid by the Master of the Horse. So when his lordship offered to take him to Ingouville in his carriage, the little notary merely said that he must return home to accompany his wife. Seeing by his sullen manner that there was something wrong, the Duke graciously replied, 'If you will allow me, I shall have the honour of going round to fetch Madame Latournelle.'

In spite of an emphatic shrug of his despotic aunt's shoulders, the Duke set out with the little notary. Intoxicated with the delight of seeing a magnificent carriage at her door, and men in the royal livery to let

down the steps, the lawyer's wife did not know which way to turn for her gloves, her parasol, her bag, and her dignity, when it was announced to her that the Master of the Horse had come to fetch her. As soon as she was in the carriage, while pouring out civilities to the little Duke, she suddenly exclaimed with kindly impulse—

'Oh, and Butscha?'

'Bring Butscha too,' said the Duke, smiling.

As the harbour-men, who had collected round the dazzling vehicle, saw these three little men with that tall meagre woman, they looked at each other and laughed.

'If you stuck them together end to end, perhaps you might make a man tall enough for that long May-pole,' said a sailor from Bordeaux.

'Have you anything else to take with you, Madame?' the Duke asked jestingly, as the footman stood waiting for his orders.

'No, Monseigneur,' replied she, turning scarlet and looking at her husband as much as to say, 'What have I done wrong?'

'His Lordship,' said Butscha, 'does me too much honour in speaking of me as a thing; a poor clerk like me is a nameless object.'

Though he spoke lightly, the Duke coloured and made no reply. Grand folks are always in the wrong to bandy jests with those below them. Banter is a game, and a game implies equality. And, indeed, it is to obviate the unpleasant results of such a transient familiarity that, when the game is over, the players have a right not to recognise each other.

The Duke's visit to le Havre was ostensibly for the settlement of an immense undertaking, namely, the reclaiming of a vast tract of land, left dry by the sea between two streams, of which the ownership had just been confirmed to the Hérouville family by the High Court of Appeal. The proposed scheme was no less a

matter than the adjustment of sluice gates to two bridges, to drain a tract of mud flats extending for about a kilometre, with a breadth of three or four hundred acres, to embank roads and dig dykes. When the Duc d'Hérouville had explained the nature and position of the land, Charles Mignon observed that he would have to wait till nature had enabled the soil to settle by the consolidation of its still shifting natural constituents.

'Time, which has providentially enriched your estate, Monsieur le Duc, must be left to complete its work,' said he, in conclusion. 'You will do well to wait another fifty years before setting to work.'

'Do not let that be your final opinion, Monsieur le Comte,' said the Duke. 'Come to Hérouville, see, and judge for yourself.'

Charles Mignon replied that some capitalist would need to look into the matter with a cool head; and this remark had given Monsieur d'Hérouville an excuse for calling at the Chalet.

Modeste made a deep impression on him; he begged the favour of a visit from her, saying that his aunt and sister had heard of her, and would be happy to make her acquaintance. On this, Charles Mignon proposed to introduce his daughter to the two ladies, and invited them to dine with him on the day when he should be re-established in his former home; this the Duke accepted. The nobleman's blue ribbon, his title, and, above all, his rapturous glances, had their effect on Modeste; still, she was admirably calm in speech, manner, and dignity. The Duke when he left seemed loath to depart, but he had received an invitation to go to the Chalet every evening, on the pretext that, of course, no courtier of Charles x. could possibly endure an evening without a game of whist.

So, on the following evening, Modeste was to see her three admirers all on the stage at once.

Say what she will, it is certainly flattering to a girl to

see several rivals fluttering around her, men of talent, fame, or high birth, all trying to shine and please her, though the logic of the heart will lead her to sacrifice everything to personal predilection. Even if Modeste should lose credit by the admission, she owned, at a later day, that the feelings expressed in her letters had paled before the pleasure of seeing three men, so different, vying with each other—three men, each of whom would have done honour to the most exacting family pride. At the same time, this luxury of vanity gave way before the misanthropical spirit of mischief engendered by the bitter affront which she already thought of merely as a disappointment. So when her father said to her with a smile—

'Well, Modeste, would you like to be a duchess?'

'Ill fortune has made me philosophical,' she replied, with a mocking curtsey.

'You are content to be Baroness?' said Butscha.

'Or Viscountess?' replied her father.

'How could that be?' said Modeste quickly.

'Why, if you were to accept Monsieur de la Brière, he would certainly have influence enough with the King to get leave to take my title and bear my arms.'

'Oh, if it is a matter of borrowing a disguise, he will make no difficulties!' replied Modeste bitterly.

Butscha did not understand this sarcasm, of which only Monsieur and Madame Mignon and Dumay knew the meaning.

'As soon as marriage is in question, every man assumes a disguise,' said Madame Latournelle, 'and women set them the example. Ever since I can remember I have heard it said, "Monsieur this or Mademoiselle that is making a very good match"—so the other party must be making a bad one, I suppose?'

'Marriage,' said Butscha, 'is like an action at law; one side is always left dissatisfied; and if one party deceives the other, half the married couples one sees certainly play the farce at the cost of the other.'

'Whence you conclude, Sire Butscha?' asked Modeste.

'That we must always keep our eyes sternly open to the enemy's movements,' replied the clerk.

'What did I tell you, my pet?' said Charles Mignon, alluding to his conversation with his daughter on the sea-shore.

'Men, to get married,' said Latournelle, 'play as many parts as mothers make their daughters play in order to get them off their hands.'

'Then you think stratagem allowable?' said Modeste.

'On both sides,' cried Gobenheim. 'Then the game is even.'

This conversation was carried on in a fragmentary manner, between the deals, and mixed up with the opinions each one allowed himself to express about Monsieur d'Hérouville, who was thought quite good-looking by the little notary, by little Dumay, and by little Butscha.

'I see,' said Madame Mignon, with a smile, 'that Madame Latournelle and my husband are quite monsters here!'

'Happily for him the Colonel is not excessively tall,' replied Butscha, while the lawyer was dealing, 'for a tall man who is also intelligent is always a rare exception.'

But for this little discussion on the legitimate use of matrimonial wiles, the account of the evening so anxiously expected by Butscha might seem lengthy; but wealth, for which so much secret meanness was committed, may perhaps lend to the minutiæ of private life the interest which is always aroused by the social feeling so frankly set forth by Ernest in his reply to Modeste.

In the course of the next morning Desplein arrived. He stayed only so long as was needful for sending to le Havre for a relay of post-horses, which were at once put

in—about an hour. After examining Madame Mignon, he said she would certainly recover her sight, and fixed the date for the operation a month later. This important consultation was held, of course, in the presence of the family party at the Chalet, all anxiously eager to hear the decision of the Prince of Science. The illustrious member of the Academy of Science asked the blind woman ten short questions, while examining her eyes in the bright light by the window. Modeste, amazed at the value of time to this famous man, noticed that his travelling chaise was full of books, which he intended to read on the way back to Paris, for he had come away on the previous evening, spending the night in sleeping and travelling.

The swiftness and clearness of Desplein's decisions on every answer of Madame Mignon's, his curt speech, his manner, all gave Modeste, for the first time, any clear idea of a man of genius. She felt the enormous gulf between Canalis, a man of second-rate talents, and Desplein, a more than superior mind.

A man of genius has in the consciousness of his talent, and the assurance of his fame, a domain, as it were, where his legitimate pride can move and breathe freely without incommoding other people. Then the incessant conflict with men and things gives him no time to indulge the coquettish conceits in which the heroes of fashion indulge, as they hastily reap the harvest of a passing season, while their vanity and self-love are exacting and irritable, like a sort of custom-house alert to seize a toll on everything that passes within its ken.

Modeste was all the more delighted with the great surgeon because he seemed struck by her extreme beauty —he, under whose hands so many women had passed, and who for years had been scrutinising them with the lancet and microscope.

'It would really be too bad,' said he, with the gallantry which he could so well assume, in contrast to his habitual

abruptness, 'that a mother should be deprived of seeing such a lovely daughter.'

Modeste herself waited on the great surgeon at the simple luncheon he would accept. She, with her father and Dumay, escorted the learned man, for whom so many sick were longing, as far as the chaise which waited for him at the side gate, and there, her eyes beaming with hope, she said once more to Desplein—

'Then dear mamma will really see me?'

'Yes, my pretty Will-o'-the-Wisp, I promise you she shall,' he replied, with a smile; 'and I am incapable of deceiving you, for I too have a daughter.'

The horses whirled him off as he spoke the words, which had an unexpected touch of feeling. Nothing is more bewitching than the unforeseen peculiar to very clever men.

This visit was the event of the day, and it left a track of light in Modeste's soul. The enthusiastic child admired without guile this man whose life was at everybody's command, and in whom the habit of contemplating physical suffering had overcome every appearance of egoism.

In the evening, when Gobenheim, the Latournelles, Canalis, Ernest, and the Duc d'Hérouville had assembled, they congratulated the Mignon family on the good news given them by Desplein. Then, of course, the conversation, led by Modeste, as we know her from her letters, turned on this man whose genius, unfortunately for his glory, could only be appreciated by the most learned men and the Medical Faculty. And Gobenheim uttered this speech, which is in our days the sanctifying anointing of genius in the ears of economists and bankers—

'He makes enormous sums.'

'He is said to be very greedy!' replied Canalis.

The praise lavished on Desplein by Modeste annoyed the poet. Vanity behaves like Woman. They both believe that they lose something by praise or affection

bestowed on another. Voltaire was jealous of the wit of a man whom Paris admired for two days, just as a duchess takes offence at a glance bestowed on her waiting maid. So great is the avarice of these two feelings, that they feel robbed of a pittance bestowed on the poor.

'And do you think, Monsieur,' asked Modeste, with a smile, 'that a genius should be measured by the ordinary standard?'

'It would first be necessary, perhaps,' said Canalis, 'to define a man of genius. One of his prime characteristics is inventiveness—the invention of a type, of a system, of a power. Napoleon was an inventor, apart from his other characteristics of genius. He invented his method of warfare. Walter Scott is an inventor, Linnæus was an inventor, so are Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire and Cuvier. Such men are geniuses above all else. They renew, or expand, or modify science or art. But Desplein is a man whose immense talent consists in applying laws that were previously discovered; in detecting, by natural intuition, the final tendency of every temperament, and the hour marked out by nature for the performance of an operation. He did not, like Hippocrates, lay the foundations of Science itself. He has not discovered a system, like Galen, Broussais, or Rasori. His is the genius of the executant, like Moscheles on the piano, Paganini on the violin, or Farinelli on his own larynx—men who display immense powers, but who do not create music. Between Beethoven and Madame Catalani you will allow that to him should be awarded the crown of genius and suffering; to her a vast heap of five-franc pieces. We can pay our debt to one, while the world must for ever remain in debt to the other! We owe more and more to Molière every day, and we have already overpaid Baron.'

'It seems to me that you are giving too large a share to ideas, my dear fellow,' said La Brière, in a sweet and gentle voice that was in startling contrast to the poet's peremptory style, for his flexible voice had lost its

insinuating tone and assumed the dominant ring of rhetoric. 'Genius ought to be estimated chiefly for its utility. Parmentier, Jacquard, and Papin, to whom statues will one day be erected, were also men of genius. They have in a certain direction altered, or will alter, the face of nations. From this point of view Desplein will always appear in the eyes of thinking men accompanied by a whole generation whose tears and sufferings have been alleviated by his mighty hand.'

That Ernest should have expressed this opinion was enough to prompt Modeste to contest it.

'In that case, Monsieur,' said she, 'the man who should find means to reap corn without spoiling the straw, by a machine that should do the work of ten labourers, would be a man of genius?'

'Oh yes, my child,' said Madame Mignon, 'he would be blessed by the poor, whose bread would then be cheaper; and he whom the poor bless is blessed by God.'

'That is to give utility the preference over art,' said Modeste, with a toss of her head.'

'But for utility,' said her father, 'on what would art be founded? On what basis would it rest, on what would the poet live, and who would give him shelter, who would pay him?'

'Oh, my dear father, that is quite the view of a merchant captain, a Philistine, a counter-jumper. That Gobenheim or Monsieur de la Brière should hold it I can understand; they are interested in the solution of such social problems; but you, whose life has been so romantically useless to your age, since your blood spilt on the soil of Europe, and the terrible sufferings required of you by a Colossus, have not hindered France from losing ten departments which the Republic had conquered,—how can you subscribe to a view so excessively *out of date*, as the Romantics have it?—It is easy to see that you have dropped from China.'

The disrespect of Modeste's speech was aggravated by

the scornful and contemptuous flippancy of the tone in which she intentionally spoke, and which astonished Madame Latournelle, Madame Mignon, and Dumay. Madame Latournelle, though she opened her eyes wide enough, could not see what Modeste was driving at; Butscha, who was as alert as a spy, looked significantly at Monsieur Mignon on seeing his face flush with deep and sudden indignation.

'A little more, Mademoiselle, and you would have failed in respect to your father,' said the Colonel with a smile, enlightened by Butscha's glance. 'That is what comes of spoiling a child.'

'I am an only daughter!' she retorted insolently.

'Unique!' said the notary, with emphasis.

'Monsieur,' said Modeste to Latournelle, 'my father is very willing that I should educate him. He gave me life, I give him wisdom—he will still be my debtor.'

'But there is a way of doing it—and, above all, a time for it,' said Madame Mignon.

'But Mademoiselle is very right,' said Canalis, rising, and placing himself by the chimney-piece in one of the finest postures of his collection of attitudes. 'God in His foresight has given man food and clothing, and has not directly endowed him with Art! He has said to man, "To eat, you must stoop to the earth; to think, you must uplift yourself to Me!"—We need the life of the soul as much as the life of the body. Hence there are two forms of utility—obviously we do not wear books on our feet. From the utilitarian point of view, a canto of an epic is not to compare with a bowl of cheap soup from a charity kitchen. The finest idea in the world cannot take the place of the sail of a ship. An automatic boiler, no doubt, by lifting itself two inches, supplies us with calico thirty sous a yard cheaper; but this machine and the inventions of industry do not breathe the life of the people, and will never tell the future that it has existed; whereas Egyptian art,

Mexican art, Greek or Roman art, with their masterpieces, stigmatised as useless, have borne witness to the existence of these nations through a vast space of time in places where great intermediate nations have vanished without leaving even a name-card, for lack of men of genius! Works of genius form the *summum* of a civilisation, and presuppose a great use. You, no doubt, would not think a pair of boots better in itself than a drama, nor prefer a windmill to the Church of Saint-Ouen? Well, a nation is moved by the same spirit as an individual, and man's favourite dream is to survive himself morally, as he reproduces himself physically. What survives of a nation is the work of its men of genius.

'At this moment France is a vigorous proof of the truth of this proposition. She is assuredly outdone by England in industry, commerce, and navigation; nevertheless, she leads the world, I believe, by her artists, her gifted men, and the taste of her products. There is not an artist, not a man of mark anywhere, who does not come to Paris to win his patent of mastery. There is at this day no school of painting but in France; and we shall rule by the Book more surely perhaps, and for longer, than by the Sword.

'Under Ernest's system the flowers of luxury would be suppressed—the beauty of woman, music, painting, and poetry. Society would not, indeed, be overthrown; but who would accept life on such terms? All that is useful is horrible and ugly. The kitchen is indispensable in a house, but you take good care never to stay in it; you live in a drawing-room, ornamented, as this is, with perfectly superfluous things. Of what use are those beautiful pictures and all this carved woodwork? Nothing is beautiful but what we feel to be useless. We have called the sixteenth century the age of the Renaissance with admirable accuracy of expression. That century was the dawn of a new world; men will

still talk of it when some preceding ages are forgotten, whose sole merit will be that they have existed—like the millions of beings that are of no account in a generation.'

'*Guenille, soit! ma guenille m'est chère*'—'A poor thing, but mine own,' said the Duc d'Hérouville playfully, during the silence that followed this pompous declamation of prose.

'But,' said Butscha, taking up the cudgels against Canalis, 'does the art exist which, according to you, is the sphere in which genius should disport itself? Is it not rather a magnificent fiction which social man is madly bent on believing? What need have I for a landscape in Normandy hanging in my room, when I can go and see it so well done by God? We have in our dreams finer poems than the *Iliad*. For a very moderate sum I can find at Valognes, at Carentan, as in Provence, at Arles, Venuses quite as lovely as Titian's. The *Police News* publishes romances, different indeed from Walter Scott's, but with terrible endings, in real blood, and not in ink. Happiness and virtue are far above art and genius!'

'Bravo, Butscha!' cried Madame Latournelle.

'What did he say?' asked Canalis of La Brière, ceasing to watch Modeste, in whose eyes and attitude he read the delightful evidence of her artless admiration.

The scorn with which he had been treated, and, above all, the girl's disrespectful speech to her father, had so depressed the unhappy La Brière that he made no reply; his gaze, sadly fixed on Modeste, betrayed absorbed meditation. The little clerk's argument was, however, repeated with some wit by the Duc d'Hérouville, who ended by saying that the raptures of Saint Theresa were far superior to the inventions of Lord Byron.

'Oh, Monsieur le Duc,' remarked Modeste, 'that is wholly personal poetry, while Lord Byron's or Molière's is for the benefit of the world——'

'Then you must make your peace with the Baron,' interrupted her father quickly. 'Now you are insisting that genius is to be useful, as much so as cotton; but you will, perhaps, think logic as stale and out of date as your poor old father.'

Butscha, La Brière, and Madame Latournelle exchanged half-laughing glances, which spurred Modeste on in her career of provocation, all the more because for a moment she was checked.

'Nay, Mademoiselle,' said Canalis with a smile, 'we have not fought nor even contradicted each other. Every work of art, whether in literature, music, painting, sculpture, or architecture, carries with it a positive social utility, like that of any other form of commercial produce. Art is the truest form of commerce; it takes it for granted. A book in these days helps its writer to pocket about ten thousand francs, and its production involves printing, paper-making, type-founding, and the bookseller's trade; that is to say, the occupation of thousands of hands. The performance of a symphony by Beethoven or of an opera by Rossini demands quite as many hands, machines, and forms of industry.

'The cost of a building is a still more tangible answer to the objection. It may, indeed, be said that works of genius rest on a very costly basis, and are necessarily profitable to the working man.'

Fairly started on this text, Canalis talked on for some minutes with a lavish use of imagery, and revelling in his own words; but it befell him, as often happens with great talkers, to find himself at the end of his harangue just where he started, and agreeing with La Brière, though he failed to perceive it.

'I discern with pleasure, my dear Baron,' said the little Duke slily, that you will make a great constitutional Minister.'

'Oh,' said Canalis, with an ostentatious flourish, 'what do we prove by all our discussions? The eternal truth

of this axiom, "Everything is true and everything is false." Moral truths, like living beings, may be placed in an atmosphere where they change their appearance to the point of being unrecognisable?

'Society lives by condemned things,' said the Duc d'Hérouville.

'What flippancy!' said Madame Latournelle in a low voice to her husband.

'He is a poet,' said Gobenheim, who overheard her.

Canalis, who had soared ten leagues above his audience, and who was, perhaps, right in his final philosophical dictum, took the sort of chill he read on every face for a symptom of ignorance; but he saw that Modeste understood him, and was content, never discerning how offensive such a monologue is to country folks, whose one idea is to prove to Parisians the vitality, intelligence, and good judgment of the provinces.

'Is it long since you last saw the Duchesse de Chaulieu?' asked the Duke of Canalis, to change the subject.

'I saw her six days ago,' replied Canalis.

'And she is well?'

'Perfectly well.'

'Remember me to her, pray, when you write.'

'I hear she is charming,' Modeste remarked to the Duke.

'Monsieur le Baron,' said he, 'knows more about that than I do.'

'She is more than charming,' said Canalis, accepting the Duke's perfidious challenge. 'But I am partial, Mademoiselle; she has been my friend these ten years. I owe to her all that may be good in me; she has sheltered me from the perils of the world. Besides, the Duc de Chaulieu started me in the way I am going. But for their influence the King and Princesses would often have forgotten a poor poet as I am; my affection, therefore, is always full of gratitude.'

And he spoke with tears in his voice.

'How much we all ought to love the woman who has inspired you with such sublime song and such a noble sentiment,' said Modeste with feeling. 'Can one conceive of a poet without a Muse?'

'He would have no heart,' said Canalis; 'he would write verse as dry as Voltaire's—who never loved any one but Voltaire.'

'When I was in Paris,' said Dumay, 'did you not do me the honour of assuring me that you felt none of the feelings you expressed?'

'A straight hit, my worthy soldier,' replied the poet with a smile; 'but you must understand that at the same time it is allowable to have a great deal of heart in the intellectual life as well as in real life. A man may express very fine sentiments without feeling them, or feel them without being able to express them. La Brière, my friend there, loves to distraction,' said he generously, as he looked at Modeste. 'I, who love at least as much as he does, believe—unless I am under an illusion—that I can give my passion a literary form worthy of its depth.—Still, I will not answer for it, Mademoiselle,' said he, turning to Modeste with a rather over elaborate grace, 'that I shall not be bereft of wits by to-morrow——'

And thus the poet triumphed over every obstacle, burning in honour of his love the sticks they tried to trip him up with, while Modeste was dazzled by this Parisian brilliancy, which was unfamiliar to her, and which lent a glitter to the orator's rhetoric.

'What a mountebank!' said Butscha in a whisper to Latournelle, after listening to a magniloquent tirade on the Catholic religion, and the happiness of having a pious wife, poured out in response to an observation from Madame Mignon.

Modeste had a bandage over her eyes; the effect of his delivery, and the attention she intentionally devoted

to Canalis, prevented her perceiving what Butscha saw and noted—the declamatory tone, the lack of simplicity, rant taking the place of feeling, and all the incoherence which prompted the clerk's rather too severe epithet.

While Monsieur Mignon, Dumay, Butscha, and Latournelle wondered at the poet's want of sequence, overlooking, indeed, the inevitable digressions of conversation, which in France is always very devious, Modeste was admiring the poet's versatility, saying to herself as she led him to follow the tortuous windings of her fancy, 'He loves me!'

Butscha, like all the other spectators of this performance, as we must call it, was struck by the chief fault of all egoists, which Canalis shows a little too much, like all men who are accustomed to speechify in drawing-rooms. Whether he knew beforehand what the other speaker meant to say, or merely did not listen, or had the power of listening while thinking of something else, Melchior wore the look of inattention which is as disconcerting to another man's flow of words as it is wounding to his vanity.

Not to attend to what is said is not merely a lack of politeness; it is an expression of contempt. And Canalis carries this habit rather too far, for he often neglects to reply to a remark that requires an answer, and goes off to the subject he is absorbed in without any polite transition. Though this form of impertinence may be accepted without protest from a man of position, it nevertheless creates a leaven of hatred and vengeful feeling at the bottom of men's hearts; in an equal, it may even break up a friendship.

When by any chance Melchior compels himself to listen, he falls into another failing—he only lends himself, he does not give himself up. Nothing in social intercourse pays better than the bestowal of attention. 'Blessed are they that hear!' is not only a precept of the Gospel, it is also an excellent speculation; act on it,

and you will be forgiven everything, even vices. Canalis took much upon him in the intention of charming Modeste; but while he was sacrificing himself to her, he was himself all the while with the others.

Modeste, pitiless for the ten persons she was martyrising, begged Canalis to read them some piece of his verse; she wanted to hear a specimen of that much-praised elocution.

Canalis took the volume offered him by Modeste and cooed—for that is the correct word—the poem that is supposed to be his finest, an imitation of Moore's 'Loves of the Angels,' entitled 'Vitalis,' which was received with some yawns by Mesdames Latournelle and Dumay, by Gobenheim, and the cashier.

'If you play whist well, Monsieur,' said Gobenheim, offering him five cards spread out in a fan, 'I have never met with so accomplished a gentleman.'

The question made every one laugh, for it was the expression of the common wish.

'I play it well enough to be able to end my days in a country town,' replied Canalis. 'There has, I dare say, been more of literature and conversation than whist players care to have,' he added in an impertinent tone, flinging the book on to the side table.

This incident shows what dangers are incurred by the hero of a salon when, like Canalis, he moves outside his orbit; he is then in the case of an actor who is a favourite with one particular public, but whose talent is wasted when he quits his own stage and ventures on to that of a superior theatre.

The Baron and the Duke were partners; Gobenheim played with Latournelle. Modeste sat down at the great poet's elbow, to the despair of Ernest, who marked on the capricious girl's countenance the progress of Canalis' fascination. La Brière had not known the power of seduction possessed by Melchior, and often denied by nature to genuine souls, who are generally shy. This

gift demands a boldness and readiness of spirit which might be called the acrobatic agility of the mind; it even allows of a little part-playing; but is there not, morally speaking, always something of the actor in a poet? There is, indeed, a wide difference between expressing feelings we do not experience though we can imagine them in all their variety, and pretending to have them when they seem necessary to success on the stage of private life; and yet, if the hypocrisy needful to a man of the world has cankered the poet, he easily transfuses the powers of his talent into the expression of the required sentiment, just as a great man who has buried himself in solitude at last finds his heart overflowing into his brain.

'He is playing for millions,' thought La Brière in anguish; 'and he will act passion so well that Modeste will believe in it!'

And instead of showing himself more delightful and wittier than his rival, La Brière, like the Duc d'Hérouville, sat gloomy, uneasy, and on the watch; but while the courtier was studying the heiress's vagaries, Ernest was a prey to the misery of black and concentrated jealousy, and had not yet won a single glance from his idol. He presently went into the garden for a few minutes with Butscha.

'It is all over, she is crazy about him,' said he. 'I am worse than disagreeable—and, after all, she is right! Canalis is delightful, he is witty even in his silence, he has passion in his eyes, poetry in his harangues——'

'Is he an honest man?' asked Butscha.

'Oh yes,' replied La Brière. 'He is loyal, chivalrous, and under Modeste's influence he is quite capable of getting over the little faults he has acquired under Madame de Chaulieu——'

'You are a good fellow!' exclaimed the little hunchback. 'But is he capable of loving—will he love her?'

'I do not know—' replied Ernest. 'Has she mentioned me?' he asked after a short silence.

'Yes,' said Butscha, and he repeated what Modeste had said about borrowing a disguise.

The young fellow threw himself on a seat and hid his face in his hands. He could not restrain his tears, and would not let Butscha see them; but the dwarf was the man to guess them.

'What is wrong, Monsieur?' said he.

'She is right!' cried La Brière, suddenly sitting up. 'I am a wretch.'

He told the story of the trick he had been led into by Canalis, explaining to Butscha that he had wished to undeceive Modeste before she had unmasked; and he overflowed in rather childish lamentations over the perversity of his fate. Butscha's sympathy recognised this as love in its most vigorous and youthful artlessness, in its genuine and deep anxiety.

'But why,' said he, 'do you not make the best of yourself to Mademoiselle Modeste, instead of leaving your rival to prance alone?'

'Ah! you evidently never felt your throat tighten as soon as you tried to speak to her,' said La Brière. 'Do you not feel a sensation at the roots of your hair, and all over your skin, when she looks at you, even without seeing you?'

'Still you had your wits about you sufficiently to be deeply grieved when she as good as told her father that he was an old woman.'

'Monsieur, I love her too truly not to have felt it like a dagger-thrust when I heard her thus belie the perfection I ascribed to her!'

'But Canalis, you see, justified her,' replied Butscha.

'If she has more vanity than good feeling, she would not be worth regretting!' said Ernest.

At this moment Modeste came out to breathe the freshness of the starlit night with Canalis, who had

been losing at cards, her father, and Madame Dumay. While his daughter walked on with Melchior, Charles Mignon left her and came up to La Brière.

'Your friend ought to have been an advocate, Monsieur,' said he with a smile, and looking narrowly at the young man.

'Do not be in a hurry to judge a poet with the severity you might exercise on an ordinary man, like me, for instance, Monsieur le Comte,' said La Brière. 'The poet has his mission. He is destined by nature to see the poetical side of every question, just as he expresses the poetry of everything; thus when you fancy that he is arguing against himself, he is faithful to his calling. He is a painter ready to represent either a Madonna or a courtesan. Molière is alike right in his pictures of old men and young men, and Molière certainly had a sound judgment. These sports of fancy which corrupt second-rate minds have no influence over the character of really great men.'

Charles Mignon pressed the young fellow's hand, saying, 'At the same time, this versatility might be used by a man to justify himself for actions diametrically antagonistic, especially in politics.'

At this moment Canalis was saying in an insinuating voice, in reply to some saucy remark of Modeste's: 'Ah, Mademoiselle, never believe that the multiplicity of emotions can in any degree diminish strength of feeling. Poets, more than other men, must love with constancy and truth. In the first place, do not be jealous of what is called 'The Muse.' Happy is the wife of a busy man! If you could but hear the lamentations of the wives who are crushed under the idleness of husbands without employment, or to whom wealth gives much leisure, you would know that the chief happiness of a Parisian woman is liberty, sovereignty in her home. And we poets allow the wife to hold the sceptre, for we cannot possibly condescend to the tyranny exerted by

small minds. We have something better to do.—If ever I should marry, which I vow is a very remote disaster in my life, I should wish my wife to enjoy the perfect moral liberty which a mistress always preserves, and which is perhaps the source of all her seductiveness.'

Canalis put forth all his spirit and grace in talking of love, marriage, the worship of woman, and arguing with Modeste, till presently Monsieur Mignon, who came to join them, seized a moment's silence to take his daughter by the arm and lead her back to Ernest, whom the worthy Colonel had advised to attempt some explanation.

'Mademoiselle,' said Ernest in a broken voice, 'I cannot possibly endure to remain here the object of your scorn. I do not defend myself, I make no attempt at justification; I only beg to point out to you that before receiving your flattering letter addressed to the man and not to the poet—your last letter—I desired, and by a letter written at le Havre I intended, to dispel the mistake under which you wrote. All the feelings I have had the honour of expressing to you are sincere. A hope beamed on me when, in Paris, your father told me that he was poor;—but now, if all is lost, if nothing is left to me but eternal regrets, why should I stay where there is nothing for me but torture?—Let me only take away with me one smile from you. It will remain graven on my heart.'

'Monsieur,' said Modeste, who appeared cold and absent-minded, 'I am not the mistress here; but I certainly should deeply regret keeping any one here who should find neither pleasure nor happiness in staying!'

She turned away, and took Madame Dumay's arm to go back into the house. A few minutes later all the personages of this domestic drama, once more united in the drawing-room, were surprised to see Modeste sitting by the Duc d'Hérouville, and flirting with him in the best style of the most wily Parisienne. She watched his play, gave him advice when he asked it, and took oppor-

tunities of saying flattering things to him, placing the chance advantage of noble birth on the same level as that of talent or of beauty.

Canalis knew, or fancied he knew, the reason for this caprice: he had tried to pique Modeste by speaking of marriage as a disaster, and seeming to be averse to it; but like all who play with fire, it was he who was burnt. Modeste's pride and disdain alarmed the poet; he came up to her, making a display of jealousy all the more marked because it was assumed. Modeste, as implacable as the angels, relished the pleasure she felt in the exercise of her power, and naturally carried it too far. The Duc d'Hérouville had never been so well treated: a woman smiled on him!

At eleven o'clock, an unheard-of hour at the Chalet, the three rivals left, the Duke thinking Modeste charming, Canalis regarding her as a coquette, and La Brière heartbroken by her relentlessness.

For a week the heiress still remained to her three admirers just what she had been on that evening, so that the poet seemed to have triumphed, in spite of the whims and freaks which from time to time inspired some hopes in the Duc d'Hérouville. Modeste's irreverence to her father, and the liberties she took with him; her irritability towards her blind mother, as she half-grudgingly did her the little services which formerly had been the delight of her filial affection, seemed to be the outcome of a wayward temper and liveliness tolerated in her childhood. When Modeste went too far she would assert a code of her own, and ascribe her levity and fractiousness to her spirit of independence. She owned to Canalis and the Duke that she hated obedience, and regarded this as an obstacle in the way of marriage, thus sounding her suitors' character after the manner of those who pierce the soil to bring up gold, coal, stone, or water.

'I shall never find a husband,' said she, the day before that on which the family were to reinstate themselves in the Villa, 'who will endure my caprices with such kindness as my father's, which has never failed for an instant, or the indulgence of my adorable mother.'

'They know that you love them, Mademoiselle,' said La Brière.

'Be assured, Mademoiselle, that your husband will know the full value of his treasure,' added the Duke.

'You have more wit and spirit than are needed to break in a husband,' said Canalis, laughing.

Modeste smiled, as Henri IV. may have smiled when, by extracting three answers to an insidious question, he had revealed to some foreign Ambassador the character of his three leading Ministers.

On the day of the dinner, Modeste, led away by her preference for Canalis, walked alone with him for some time up and down the gravelled walk leading from the house to the lawn with its flower-beds. It was easy to perceive, from the poet's gestures and the young heiress's demeanour, that she was lending a favourable ear to Canalis, and the two Demoiselles d'Hérouville came out to interrupt a *tête-à-tête* that scandalised them. With the tact natural to women in such cases, they turned the conversation to the subject of the Court, of the high position conferred by an office under the Crown, explaining the difference subsisting between an appointment to the Household and one held under the Crown; they tried, in fact, to intoxicate Modeste by appealing to her pride, and displaying to her one of the highest positions which a woman at that time could hope to attain.

'To have a Duke in your son,' cried the old lady, 'is a positive distinction. The mere title is a fortune out of reach of reverses, to bequeath to your children.'

'To what ill-fortune,' said Canalis, very ill pleased at this interruption to his conversation, 'must we attribute the small success that the Master of the Horse has

hitherto achieved in the matter in which that title is supposed to be of most service as supporting a man's pretensions?'

The two unmarried ladies shot a look at Canalis as full of venom as a viper's fangs, but were so put out of countenance by Modeste's sarcastic smile that they had not a word in reply.

'The Master of the Horse,' said Modeste to Canalis, 'has never blamed you for the diffidence you have learnt from your fame; why then grudge him his modesty?'

'Also,' said the Duke's aunt, 'we have not yet met with a wife worthy of my nephew's rank. Some we have seen who had merely the fortune that might suit the position; others who, without the fortune, had indeed the right spirit; and I must confess that we have done well to wait till God should give us the opportunity of making acquaintance with a young lady in whom should be united both the noble soul and the handsome fortune of a Duchesse d'Hérouville!'

'My dear Modeste,' said Hélène d'Hérouville, walking away a few steps with her new friend, 'there are a thousand Barons de Canalis in the kingdom, and a hundred poets in Paris who are as good as he; and he is so far from being a great man, that I, a poor girl, fated to take the veil for lack of a dower, would have nothing to say to him!—And you do not know, I dare say, that he is a man who has, for the last ten years, been at the beck and call of the Duchesse de Chaulieu. Really, none but an old woman of sixty could put up with the endless little ailments with which, it is said, the poet is afflicted, the least of which was unendurable in Louis XVI. Still, the Duchess, of course, does not suffer from them as his wife would; he is not so constantly with her as a husband would be——'

And so by one of the manœuvres peculiar to woman against woman, Hélène d'Hérouville whispered in every ear the calumnies which women, jealous of Madame de

Chaulieu, propagated concerning the poet. This trivial detail, not rare in the gossip of young girls, shows that the Comte de la Bastie's fortune was already made the object of ardent rivalry.

Within ten days, opinions at the Chalet had varied considerably about the three men who aspired to Modeste's hand. This change, wholly to the disadvantage of Canalis, was founded on considerations calculated to make the hero of any form of fame reflect deeply. When we see the passion with which an autograph is craved, it is impossible to doubt that public curiosity is strongly excited by celebrity. Most provincials, it is evident, have no very exact idea of the manner in which illustrious persons fasten their cravat, walk on the Boulevard, gape at the crows, or eat a cutlet; for, as soon as they see a man wearing the halo of fashion, or resplendent with popularity—more or less transient, no doubt, but always the object of envy—they are ready to exclaim, 'Ah! so that is the thing!' or, 'Well, that is odd!' or something equally absurd. In a word, the strange charm that is produced by every form of renown, even when justly acquired, has no permanence. To superficial minds, especially to the sarcastic and the envious, it is an impression as swift as a lightning-flash, and never repeated. Glory, it would seem, like the sun, is hot and luminous from afar, but, when we get near, it is as cold as the peak of an Alp. Perhaps a man is really great only to his peers; perhaps the defects inherent in the conditions of humanity are more readily lost to their eyes than to those of vulgar admirers. Thus, to be constantly pleasing, a poet would be compelled to display the deceptive graces of those persons who can win forgiveness for their obscurity by amiable manners and agreeable speeches, since, besides genius, the vapid drawing-room virtues and harmless domestic twaddle are exacted from him.

The great poet of the Faubourg Saint-Germain, who

refused to yield to this law of society, found that insulting indifference soon took the place of the fascination at first caused by his conversation at evening parties. Cleverness too prodigally displayed produces the same effect on the mind as a shop full of cut glass has on the eyes; this sufficiently explains that Canalis' glitter soon wearied those people who, to use their own words, like something solid. Then, under the necessity of appearing an ordinary man, the poet found many rocks ahead where La Brière could win the good opinion of those who, at first, had thought him sullen. They felt the desire to be revenged on Canalis for his reputation by making more of his friend. The most kindly people are so made. The amiable and unpretentious Referendary shocked nobody's vanity; falling back on him, every one discerned his good heart, his great modesty, the discretion of a strong box, and delightful manners. On political questions the Duc d'Hérouville held Ernest far above Canalis. The poet, as erratic, ambitious, and mutable as Tasso, loved luxury and splendour, and ran into debt; while the young lawyer, even-minded, living prudently, and useful without officiousness, hoped for promotion without asking it, and was saving money meanwhile.

Canalis had indeed justified the good people who were watching him. For the last two or three days he had given way to fits of irritability, of depression, of melancholy, without any apparent cause—the caprices of temper that come of the nervous poetical temperament. These eccentricities—as they are called in a country town—had their cause in the wrong, which each day made worse, that he was doing to the Duchesse de Chaulieu, to whom he knew he ought to write, without being able to make up his mind to do it; they were anxiously noted by the gentle American and worthy Madame Latournelle, and more than once came under discussion between them and Madame Mignon. Canalis, knowing nothing of these discussions, felt their effect.

He was no longer listened to with the same attention, the faces round him did not express the rapture of the first days, while Ernest was beginning to be listened to. For the last two days the poet had, therefore, been bent on captivating Modeste, and seized every moment when he could be alone with her to cast over her the tangles of the most impassioned language. Modeste's heightened colour plainly showed the two Demoiselles d'Hérouville with what pleasure the heiress heard insinuating conceits charmingly spoken; and, uneasy at the poet's rapid advances, they had recourse to the *ultima ratio* of women in such predicaments—to calumny, which rarely misses its aim when it appeals to vehement physical repulsion.

As he sat down to dinner, the poet saw a cloud on his idol's brow, and read in it Mademoiselle d'Hérouville's perfidy; so he decided that he must offer himself as a husband to Modeste at the first opportunity he should have of speaking to her. As he and the two noble damsels exchanged some subacid, though polite remarks, Gobenheim nudged Butscha, who sat next to him, to look at the poet and the Master of the Horse.

'They will demolish each other,' said he in a whisper.

'Canalis has genius enough to demolish himself unaided,' said the dwarf.

In the course of the dinner, which was extremely splendid, and served to perfection, the Duke achieved a great triumph over Canalis. Modeste, whose riding-habit had arrived the evening before, talked of the various rides to be taken in the neighbourhood. In the course of the conversation that ensued she was led to express a strong wish to see a hunt—a pleasure she had never known. The Duke at once proposed to arrange a hunt for Mademoiselle Mignon's benefit in one of the Crown forest-lands a few leagues from le Havre. Thanks to his connection with the Master of the King's Hounds, the Prince de Cadignan, he had it in his power to show

Modeste a scene of royal magnificence, to charm her by showing her the dazzling world of a Court, and making her wish to enter it by marriage. The glances exchanged by the Duke and the two Demoiselles d'Hérouville, which Canalis happened to catch, distinctly said, 'The heiress is ours!'—enough to urge the poet, who was reduced to mere personal glitter, to secure some pledge of her affection without loss of time.

Modeste, somewhat scared at having gone further than she intended with the d'Hérouvilles, after dinner, when they were walking in the grounds, went forward a little distance in a rather marked manner, accompanied by Melchior. With a young girl's not illegitimate curiosity, she allowed him to guess the calumnies repeated by Hélène, and on a remonstrance from Canalis she pledged him to secrecy, which he promised.

'These lashes of the tongue,' said he, 'are fair war in the world of fashion; your simplicity is scared by them; for my part, I can laugh at them—nay, I enjoy them. Those ladies must think his lordship's interests seriously imperilled, or they would not have recourse to them.'

Then, profiting by the opportunity given by such a piece of information, Canalis justified himself with so much mocking wit, and passion so ingeniously expressed, while thanking Modeste for her confidence, in which he insisted in seeing a slight strain of love, that she found herself quite as deeply compromised towards the poet as she was towards the Duke. Canalis felt that daring was necessary; he declared himself in plain terms. He paid his vows to Modeste in a style through which his poetic fancy shone like a moon ingeniously staged, with a brilliant picture of herself—beautifully fair, and arrayed to admiration for this family festival. The inspiration so cleverly called up, and encouraged by the complicity of the evening, the grove, the sky, and the earth, led the grasping lover beyond all reason; for he even talked of his disinterestedness, and succeeded by the flowers of his

eloquence in giving a new aspect to Diderot's stale theme of '*Five hundred francs and my Sophie*,' or the '*Give me a cottage and your heart!*' of every lover who knows that his father-in-law has a fortune.

'Monsieur,' said Modeste, after enjoying the music of this concerto so admirably composed on 'a familiar theme,' 'my parents leave me such freedom as has allowed me to hear you; but you must address yourself to them.'

'Well, then,' cried Canalis, 'only tell me that if I get their consent you will be quite satisfied to obey them.'

'I know beforehand,' said she, 'that my father has some wishes which might offend the legitimate pride of a family as old as yours, for he is bent on transmitting his title and his name to his grandsons.'

'Oh, my dear Modeste, what sacrifice would I not make to place my life in the hands of such a guardian angel as you are!'

'You must allow me not to decide my fate for life in one moment,' said she, going to join the Demoiselles d'Hérouville.

These two ladies were at that minute flattering little Latournelle's vanity in the hope of securing him to their interests. Mademoiselle d'Hérouville, to whom we must give the family name to distinguish her from her niece Hélène, was conveying to the notary that the place of President of the Court at le Havre, which Charles x. would give to a man recommended by them, was an appointment due to his honesty and talents as a lawyer. Butscha, who was walking with La Brière, in great alarm at Melchior's audacity and rapid progress, found means to speak to Modeste for a few minutes at the bottom of the garden steps as the party went indoors to give themselves up to the vexations of the inevitable rubber.

'Mademoiselle, I hope you do not yet address him as Melchior,' said he in an undertone.

'Not far short of it, my Mysterious Dwarf,' she replied, with a smile that might have seduced an angel.

'Good God!' cried the clerk, dropping his hands, which almost touched the steps.

'Well, and is not he as good as that odious gloomy Referendary in whom you take so much interest?' cried she, putting on for Ernest a haughty look of scorn, such as young girls alone have the secret of, as though their maidenhood lent them wings to soar so high. 'Would your little Monsieur de la Brière take me without a settlement?' she added after a pause.

'Ask your father,' replied Butscha, going a few steps on, so as to lead Modeste to a little distance from the windows. 'Listen to me, Mademoiselle. You know that I who speak to you am ready to lay down not my life only, but my honour for you, at any time, at any moment. So you can believe in me, you can trust me with things you would not perhaps tell your father.—Well, has that sublime Canalis ever spoken to you in the disinterested way that allows you to cast such a taunt at poor Ernest?'

'Yes.'

'And you believe him?'

'That, Malignant Clerk,' said she, giving him one of the ten or twelve nicknames she had devised for him, 'is, as it seems to me, casting a doubt on the strength of my self-respect.'

'You can laugh, dear Mademoiselle, so it cannot be serious. I can only hope that you are making a fool of him.'

'What would you think of me, Monsieur Butscha, if I thought I had any right to mock at either of the gentlemen who do me the honour to wish for me as a wife? I can tell you, Maître Jean, that even when she appears to scorn the most contemptible admiration, a girl is always flattered at having it offered to her.'

'Then I flatter you——?' said the clerk, his face

lighting up as a town is illuminated on some great occasion.

'You——?' said she. 'You give me the most precious kind of friendship, a feeling as disinterested as that of a mother for her child! Do not compare yourself to any one else, for even my father is obliged to yield to me.' She paused. 'I cannot tell you that I love you, in the sense men give to the word; but what I feel for you is eternal, and can never know any change.'

'Well, then,' said Butscha, stooping to pick up a pebble that he might leave a kiss and a tear on the tip of Modeste's shoe, 'let me watch over you as a dragon watches over a treasure.—The poet spreads before you just now all the filagree of his elaborate phrases, the tinsel of his promises. He sang of love to the sweetest chord of his lyre no doubt? If when this noble lover is fully assured of your having but a small fortune, you should see his demeanour change; if you then find him cold and embarrassed, will you still make him your husband, still honour him with your esteem?'

'Can he be a Francisque Althor?' she asked, with an expression of the deepest disgust.

'Let me have the pleasure of working this transformation scene,' said Butscha. 'Not only do I intend that it shall be sudden, but I do not despair of restoring your poet to you afterwards, in love once more, of making him blow hot and cold on your heart with as good a grace as when he argues for and against the same thing in the course of a single evening, sometimes without being aware of it——'

'And if you are right,' said she, 'whom can I trust?'

'The man who truly loves you.'

'The little Duke?'

Butscha looked at Modeste. They both walked on a few steps in silence. The girl was impenetrable; she did not wince.

'Mademoiselle, will you allow me to put into words

the thoughts that lurk at the bottom of your heart like water-mosses in a pool, and that you refuse to explain to yourself even ?'

'Why, indeed !' cried Modeste, 'is my privy councillor-in-waiting a mirror too ?'

'No, but an echo,' he replied, with a little bow stamped with the utmost modesty. 'The Duke loves you, but he loves you too well. I, a dwarf, have fully understood the exquisite delicacy of your soul. You would hate to be adored like the holy wafer in a monstrance. But being so eminently a woman, you could no more bear to see a man of whom you were always secure perpetually at your feet, than you could endure an egoist like Canalis, who would always care more for himself than for you. . . . Why ? I know not. I would I could be a woman, and an old woman, to learn the reason of the programme I can read in your eyes, which is perhaps that of every girl.

'At the same time, your lofty soul craves for adoration. When a man is at your feet you cannot throw yourself at his. "But you cannot go far in that way," Voltaire used to say. So the little Duke has, morally speaking, too many genuflexions, and Canalis not enough—not to say none at all. And I can read the mischief hidden in your smile when you are speaking to the Master of the Horse, when he speaks to you and you reply. You would never be unhappy with the Duke ; everybody would be pleased if you chose him for your husband ; but you would not love him. The coldness of egoism and the excessive fervour of perennial raptures no doubt have a negative effect on the heart of every woman.

'Obviously this is not the perpetual triumph that you would enjoy in the infinite delights of such a marriage as that you dream of, in which you would find a submission to be proud of, great little sacrifices that are gladly unconfessed, successes looked forward to with rapture, and

unforeseen magnanimity to which it is a joy to yield ; in which a woman finds herself understood even to her deepest secrets, while her love is sometimes a protection to her protector——'

'You are a wizard !' cried Modeste.

'Nor will you meet with that enchanting equality of feeling, that constant sharing of life, and that certainty of giving happiness which makes marriage acceptable, if you marry a Canalis, a man who thinks only of himself, to whom *I* is the only note in the scale, and whose attention has not yet condescended so low as to listen to your father or the Duke. An ambitious man, not of the first class, to whom your dignity and supremacy matter little, who will treat you as a necessary chattel in his house, who insults you already by his indifference on points of honour. Yes, if you allowed yourself to go so far as to slap your mother, Canalis would shut his eyes that he might not see your guilt, so hungry is he for your fortune !

'So, Mademoiselle, I was not thinking of the great poet, who is but a little actor, nor of my lord Duke, who would be for you a splendid match, but not a husband——'

'Butscha, my heart is a blank page on which you yourself write what you read,' replied Modeste. 'You are carried away by your provincial hatred of everything that compels you to look above your head. You cannot forgive the poet for being a political man, for having an eloquent tongue, and a splendid future ; you calumniate his purpose——'

'His, Mademoiselle ! He would turn his back on you within twenty-four hours with the meanness of a Vilquin.'

'Well, make him play such a farcical scene, and——'

'Ay, and in every key ; in three days—on Wednesday—do not forget. Until then, Mademoiselle, amuse yourself by making the musical box play all its airs, that the

vile discords of the antiphony may come out all the more clearly.

Modeste gaily returned to the drawing-room, where of all the men present, La Brière alone, seated in the recess of a window—whence, no doubt, he had been looking at his idol—rose at her entrance, as if an usher had shouted, 'The Queen!' It was a respectful impulse, full of the eloquence peculiar to action, which surpasses that of the finest speech. Spoken love is not to be compared with love in action—every girl of twenty is fifty as concerns this axiom; this is the seducer's strongest argument.

Instead of looking Modeste in the face, as Canalis did, bowing to her as an act of public homage, the disdained lover watched her with a slow side glance, as humble as Butscha's, almost timid. The young heiress observed this demeanour as she went to place herself by Canalis, in whose game she affected an interest. In the course of the conversation, La Brière learnt, from a remark she made to her father, that Modeste intended to begin riding again on the following Wednesday, and she mentioned that she had no riding-whip suitable to match with her handsome new habit. Ernest flashed a glance at the dwarf like a spark of fire, and a few minutes later they were walking together on the terrace.

'It is now nine o'clock,' said La Brière. 'I am off to Paris as fast as my horse will carry me. I can be there by ten to-morrow morning. My dear Butscha, from you she will accept a gift with pleasure, for she has a great regard for you; let me give her a riding-whip in your name; and, believe me, in return for such an immense favour you have in me not indeed a friend, but a slave!'

'Go; you are happy,' said the clerk. 'You have money.'

'Tell Canalis from me that I shall not be in to-night, and that he must invent some excuse for my absence for two days.'

An hour later Ernest had set out on horseback for Paris, where he arrived after twelve hours' riding, his first care being to secure a place in the mail coach for le Havre on the following day. He then went to the three first jewellers in Paris, comparing handles of riding-whips, and seeking what art could produce of the most royal perfection. He found one made by Stidmann for a Russian lady, who, after ordering it, had been unable to pay for it—a fox-hunt wrought in gold, with a ruby at the top, and exorbitantly expensive as compared with a Referendary's stipend; all his savings were swallowed up, amounting to seven thousand francs. Ernest gave a sketch of the arms of La Bastie, allowing twenty hours for them to be engraved instead of those that were on it. This handle, a masterpiece of workmanship, was fitted to an indiarubber whip, and placed in a red morocco case, lined with velvet, with a monogram of two M's on the top.

By Wednesday morning La Brière had returned by the mail, in time to breakfast with Canalis. The poet had explained his secretary's absence by saying that he was busy with some work forwarded from Paris. Butscha, who had gone to the coach office to hold out a welcoming hand to Ernest on the arrival of the mail, flew to give this work of art to Françoise Cochet, desiring her to place it on Modeste's dressing-table.

'You are going out riding, no doubt, with Mademoiselle Modeste,' said Butscha, on returning to Canalis' villa to inform Ernest, by a side glance, that the whip had safely reached its destination.

'I!' said La Brière. 'I am going to bed.'

'Well!' exclaimed Canalis, looking at his friend, 'I do not understand you at all.'

Breakfast was ready, and the poet naturally invited the clerk to sit down with them. Butscha had stayed, intending to get himself invited if necessary by La Brière, seeing on Germain's countenance the success of a hunch-

back's trick, of which his promise to Modeste may have given a hint.

'Monsieur was very wise to keep Monsieur Latournelle's clerk,' said Germain in his master's ear. Canalis and Germain, on a hint from the latter, passed into the drawing-room. 'This morning I went out to see some fishing, an expedition to which I was invited the day before yesterday by the owner of a boat I have made acquaintance with.'

Germain did not confess that he had had such bad taste as to play billiards in a café in le Havre, where Butscha had surrounded him with a number of his friends in order to be able to work upon him.

'What then?' said Canalis. 'Come to the point, and at once.'

'Monsieur le Baron, I heard a discussion about Monsieur Mignon, which I did my best to keep going—no one knew who I lived with. I tell you, Monsieur le Baron, everybody in le Havre says that you are running your head against a wall. Mademoiselle de la Bastie's fortune is, like her name, very modest. The ship on which the father came home is not his own; it belongs to some China merchants, with whom he has to settle, and things are said about it that are far from flattering to the Colonel.—Having heard that you and Monsieur le Duc were rivals for Mademoiselle de la Bastie, I take the liberty of mentioning it; for, between you and him, it is better that his Lordship should swallow the bait. On my way back I took a turn on the quay, past the theatre, where the merchants walk up and down, and I pushed my way boldly among them. These worthy folks, seeing a well-dressed man, began to talk about the affairs of the town; from one thing to another I led them to speak of Colonel Mignon; and they were so much of the same mind as the fishermen that I felt it my duty to speak. That is why I left you, sir, to get up and dress alone . . .'

'What is to be done?' cried Canalis, feeling that he

was too deeply pledged to withdraw from his promises to Modeste.

'You know my attachment to you, sir,' said Germain, seeing that the poet was thunderstruck, 'and you will not be surprised if I offer a piece of advice. If you can make this clerk drunk, he will let the cat out of the bag, and if he won't open his mouth for two bottles of champagne, he certainly will for the third. It would be a strange thing, too, if Monsieur, who will certainly be an ambassador one day, for Philoxène heard Madame la Duchesse say so,—if you, sir, cannot get round a country lawyer's clerk.'

At this moment Butscha, the unknown author of this fishing expedition, was begging the Referendary to say nothing about his journey to Paris, and not to interfere with his manœuvres at breakfast. Butscha meant to take advantage of a reaction of feeling unfavourable to Charles Mignon, which had set in at le Havre.

This was the cause of this reaction. Monsieur le Comte de la Bastie had entirely ignored those of his former friends who, during his absence, had neglected his wife and children. On hearing that a dinner was to be given at the Villa Mignon, each one flattered himself he would be among the guests, and expected an invitation; but when it was known that only Gobenheim, the Latournelles, the Duke, and the two Parisians were to be asked, there was a loud outcry at the merchant's arrogance; his marked avoidance of seeing anybody, and of ever going down to le Havre, was commented on, and attributed to scorn, on which the whole town avenged itself by casting doubts on Mignon's sudden wealth. By dint of gossip everybody soon ascertained that the money advanced to Vilquin on the Villa had been found by Dumay. This fact gave the most malignant persons grounds for the libellous supposition that Charles had confided to Dumay's known devotion the funds concerning which he anticipated litigation

on the part of his so-called partners in Canton. Charles's reticence, for his constant aim was to conceal his wealth, and the gossip of his servants, who had been put on their guard, lent an appearance of truth to these monstrous fables, believed by all who were governed by the spirit of detraction that animates rival traders. In proportion as parochial pride had formerly cried up his immense fortune as one of the makers of le Havre, so now provincial jealousy cast doubts on it.

Butscha, to whom the fishermen of the port owed more than one good turn, desired them to be secret, and to cram their new friend. He was well served. The owner of the boat told Germain that a cousin of his, a sailor, was coming from Marseilles, having just been paid off in consequence of the sale of the brig in which the Colonel had come home. The vessel was being sold by order of one Castagnould, and the cargo—according to the cousin—was worth only three or four hundred thousand francs at most.

'Germain,' said Canalis, as the servant was leaving the room, 'bring us up some Champagne and some Bordeaux. A member of the legal faculty of Normandy must carry away some memories of a poet's hospitality.—And he has the wit of *le Figaro*,' added Canalis, laying his hand on the dwarf's shoulder; 'that *petit-journal* brilliancy must be made to sparkle and foam with the wine of Champagne; we will not spare ourselves either, Ernest! Why, it is two years at least since I last got tipsy,' he added, turning to La Brière.

'With wine?—That I can quite understand,' replied the clerk. 'You get tipsy with yourself every day! In the matter of praise, you drink your fill. You are handsome; you are famous during your lifetime; your conversation is on a level with your genius; and you fascinate all the women, even my master's wife. Loved as you are by the most beautiful Sultana Valideh I ever saw—it is true, I have never seen another—you can, if

you choose, marry Mademoiselle de la Bastie.—Why, merely with making this inventory of your present advantages, to say nothing of the future—a fine title, a peerage, an embassy!—I am quite fuddled, like the men who bottle wine for other people to drink.'

'All this social magnificence is nothing,' replied Canalis, 'without that which gives them value—a fortune! Here we are men among men; fine sentiments are delightful in stanzas.'

'And in certain circum*stanzas*,' said Butscha, with a significant shrug.

'You, a master of the mystery of settlements,' said the poet, smiling at the pun, 'must know as well as I do that cottage rhymes to nothing better than pottage.'

At table Butscha played with signal success the part of le Rigaudin in *la Maison en loterie*, alarming Ernest, to whom the jests of a lawyer's office were unfamiliar; they are a match for those of the studio. The clerk repeated all the scandal of le Havre, the history of every fortune, of every boudoir, and of all the crimes committed just outside the pale of the law, what is called sailing as close hauled as possible (in Normandy, *se tirer d'affaire comme on peut*). He spared no one, and his spirits rose with the stream of wine he poured down his throat like storm water through a gutter.

'Do you know, La Brière,' said Canalis, filling up Butscha's glass, 'that this brave boy would be a first-rate secretary to an Ambassador?'

'And cut out his master!' retorted the dwarf with a look at Canalis, of insolence redeemed by the sparkle of carbonic acid gas. 'I have enough spirit of intrigue and little enough gratitude to climb on to your shoulders. A poet supporting an abortion!—Well, it has been seen, and pretty frequently—in libraries. Why, you are staring at me as if I were swallowing swords. Heh! my dear, great genius, you are a very superior man; you know full well that gratitude is a word for idiots; it is to be

found in the dictionary, but not in the human heart. I O U is a formula unhonoured on the green banks of Parnassus or Pindus. Do you suppose I feel the debt to my master's wife for having brought me up? Why, the whole town has paid it off in esteem, praise, and admiration, the most precious of all coin. I do not see the virtue that is merely an investment for the benefit of one's vanity. Men make a trade of reciprocal services; the word gratitude represents the debit side, that is all.

'As to intrigue, I adore it!—What!' he went on, in reply to a gesture from Canalis, 'do you not delight in the faculty which enables a crafty man to get the upper hand of a man of genius, which requires constant observation of the vices and weaknesses of our betters, and a sense of the nick of time for everything? Ask diplomacy whether the triumph of cunning over strength is not the most delightful success there is. If I were your secretary, Monsieur le Baron, you would soon be Prime Minister, because it would be to my interest!—Now, would you like a sample of my little talents of that kind? Hearken! You love Mademoiselle Modeste to distraction, and you are very right. In my opinion, the girl is a genuine Parisienne, for here and there a Parisienne sprouts in the country. Our Modeste would be a wife to push a man. She has that sort of thing,' said he, giving his hand a twirl in the air. 'You have a formidable rival in the Duke. Now, what will you give me to pack him off within three days?'

'Let us finish this bottle,' said the poet, refilling Butscha's glass.

'You will make me drunk!' said the clerk, 'swallowing down his ninth glass of champagne. 'Is there a bed where I may sleep for an hour? My master is as sober as a camel, the old fox, and Madame Latournelle too. They would both be hard upon me, and they would have good reason, while I should have lost mine, and I have some work to do.'

Then going back to a former subject without any transition, after the manner of a man when he is screwed, he exclaimed—

'And then, what a memory I have! It is a match for my gratitude.'

'Butscha!' exclaimed the poet, 'just now you said that you had no gratitude; you are contradicting yourself.'

'Not at all,' said the clerk. 'Forgetting almost always means remembering!—Now, then, on we go! I am made to be a secretary.'

'And how will you set to work to get rid of the Duke?' asked Canalis, charmed to find the conversation tending naturally to the subjects he aimed at.

'That—is no concern of yours,' said Butscha, with a tremendous hiccup.

Butscha rolled his head on his shoulders, and his eyes from Germain to La Brière, and from La Brière to Canalis, in the manner of a man who feels intoxication creeping over him, and wants to know in what esteem he is held; for in the wreck of drunkenness it may be noted that self-esteem is the last sentiment to float.

'Look here, great poet, you are a jolly fellow, you are. Do you take me for one of your readers, you who sent your friend to Paris to procure information concerning the house of Mignon. I humbug, you humbug, we humbug. Well and good; but do me the honour to believe that I am clear-headed enough always to keep as much conscience as I need in my sphere of life. As head clerk to Maître Latournelle my heart is a padlocked despatch-box, my lips never breathe a word of any paper concerning the clients. I know everything, and I know nothing. And then, passion is no secret: I love Modeste, she is a pupil of mine, she must marry well; and I could get round the Duke if necessary. But you are going to marry——'

'Germain, coffee and liqueurs,' said Canalis.

'Liqueurs?' repeated Butscha, holding up a forbidding hand like a too knowing maiden putting aside some little temptation. 'Oh, my poor work! By the way, there is a marriage contract to be drawn up, and my second clerk is as stupid as a matrimonial bargain, and quite capable of p-p-poking a penknife through the bride's personal property. He thinks himself a fine fellow because he measures nearly six feet—the idiot!'

'Here, this is Crème de Thé, a West Indian liqueur,' said Canalis.—'You who are Mademoiselle Modeste's adviser——'

'Her adviser?——'

'Well, do you think she loves me?'

'Ye-e-es, more than she loves the Duke,' drawled the dwarf, rousing himself from a sort of torpor, which he acted to admiration. 'She loves you for your disinterestedness. She told me that for you she felt equal to the greatest sacrifices, to giving up dress, spending only a thousand francs a year, devoting her life to prove to you that in marrying her you would have done a stroke of business. And she is devilish honest (hiccup), I can tell you, and well informed; there is nothing that girl does not know.'

'That and three hundred thousand francs,' said Canalis.

'Oh! there may be as much as you say,' replied the clerk with enthusiasm. 'Mignon Papa—and you see he is really a Mignon, a dear papa, that's what I like him for—to marry his only daughter—well, he would strip himself of everything. The Colonel has been accustomed under your Restoration to live on half-pay (hiccup), and he will be quite happy living with Dumay, speculating in a small way at le Havre; he will be sure to give the child his three hundred thousand francs.—Then we must not forget Dumay, who means to leave his fortune to Modeste. Dumay, you know, is a Breton; his birth gives security to the bargain; he never changes his

mind, and his fortune is quite equal to his master's. At the same time, since they listen to me at least as much as to you, though I do not talk so much nor so well, I said to them, "You are putting too much money into your house; if Vilquin leaves it on your hands, there are two hundred thousand francs that will bring you no return. There will be only a hundred thousand francs left to turn over, and that, in my opinion, is not enough."—At this moment the Colonel and Dumay are talking it over. Take my word for it, Modeste is rich. The people of the town talk nonsense, they are envious. Why, who in the department has such a portion?' said Butscha, holding up his fingers to count. 'Two to three hundred thousand francs in hard cash!' said he, folding down his left thumb with the forefinger of his right hand. 'That is for one. The freehold of the Villa Mignon,' and he doubled down his left forefinger, 'for two; Dumay's fortune for three,' he added, ticking it off on the middle finger. 'Why, little Mother Modeste is a lady with six hundred thousand francs of her own when the two old soldiers shall have gone aloft to take further orders from God A'mighty.'

This blunt and artless communication, broken by sips of liqueur, sobered Canalis as much as it seemed to intoxicate Butscha. To the lawyer's clerk, a mere provincial, this fortune was evidently colossal. He let his head drop on the palm of his right hand, and with the elbow majestically resting on the table, he sat blinking and talking to himself: 'In twenty years, at the pace the Code is taking us, melting down fortunes by the process of subdivision, an heiress with six hundred thousand francs will be as rare as disinterestedness in a moneylender. You may say that Modeste will spend at least twelve thousand francs a year, the interest of her fortune; but she is a very nice girl—very nice—very nice. She is as you may say—a poet must have imagery—she is an ermine as knowing as a monkey.'

'And what did you tell me?' cried Canalis in an undertone to La Brière. 'That she had six millions?'

'My dear fellow,' said Ernest, 'allow me to remark that I could say nothing. I am bound by an oath, and it is perhaps saying more than I ought to tell you——'

'An oath? and to whom?'

'To Monsieur Mignon.'

'Why, Ernest! when you know how indispensable fortune is to me'—Butscha was snoring—'you who know my position, and all I should lose in the Rue de Grenelle by marrying—you would have coolly allowed me to plunge in?' said Canalis, turning pale. 'But this is a matter between friends; and our friendship, my boy, is a compact of a far older date than this that the wily Provençal has required of you.'

'My dear fellow,' said Ernest, 'I love Modeste too well to——'

'Idiot, take her!' cried the poet. 'So break your oath——'

'Do you solemnly promise, on your honour as a man, to forget what I tell you, and to be just the same to me as though I had never confided it to you, come what may?'

'I swear it by the sacred memory of my mother!'

'Well, when I was in Paris, Monsieur Mignon told me that he was very far from having such a colossal fortune as the Mongenods had spoken of. The Colonel intends to give his daughter two hundred thousand francs. But then, Melchior, was the father suspicious? or was he sincere? It is no concern of mine to solve that question. If she should condescend to choose me, Modeste, with nothing, should be my wife.'

'A blue-stocking, appallingly learned, who has read everything and knows everything—in theory,' cried Canalis, in reply to a protesting gesture of La Brière's; 'a spoilt child, brought up in luxury during her early

years, and weaned from it for the last five! Oh, my poor friend, pause, consider——'

'Ode and Code!' said Butscha, rousing himself. 'You go in for the Ode, and I for the Code; there is only a C between. Code, from coda, a tail! You have treated me handsomely, and I like you—don't have anything to do with the Code.—Listen; a piece of good advice is not a bad return for your wine and your Crème de Thé. Old Mignon is cream too, the cream of good fellows. Well, trot out your horse, he is riding out with his daughter; you can speak frankly to him; ask him about her marriage portion; he will give you a plain answer, and you will see to the bottom of things as sure as I am tipsy, and you are a great man; but then there must be no mistake, we leave le Havre together, I suppose? I am to be your secretary, since this little chap, who thinks I am drunk, and is laughing at me, is going to leave you.—Go ahead. March!—and leave him to marry the girl.'

Canalis went to dress.

'Not a word; he is rushing on suicide,' said Butscha, as cool as Gobenheim, to La Brière, very quietly; and he telegraphed behind Canalis a signal of scorn familiar to the Paris street boy. 'Good-bye, Master,' he went on at the top of his voice, 'may I go and get forty winks in Madame Amaury's summer-house?'

'Make yourself at home,' replied the poet.

The clerk, loudly laughed at by Canalis' three servants, made his way to the summer-house, plunging into flower-beds and baskets with the perverse grace of an insect describing its endless zigzags as it tries to escape through a closed window. He scrambled up into the gazebo, and when the servants had got indoors, he sat down on a wooden bench and gave himself up to the joys of triumph. He had fooled the superior man; not only had he snatched off his mask, but he had seen him untie the strings, and he laughed as an author laughs at

his piece, with a full appreciation of the value of this *vis comica*.

'Men are tops!' cried he; 'you have only to find the end of the string that is wound round them. Why, any one could make me faint away by simply saying, "Mademoiselle Modeste has fallen off her horse and broken her leg."'

A few minutes later, Modeste, wearing a bewitching habit of dark-green kerseymere, a little hat with a green veil, doeskin gloves, and velvet boots, over which the lace frills of her drawers fell gracefully, had mounted her handsomely-saddled pony, and was showing to her father and the Duc d'Hérouville the pretty gift she had just received; she was delighted with it, seeing in it one of those attentions which most flatter a woman.

'Was it you, Monsieur le Duc?' said she, holding out the sparkling end of her whip. 'There was a card on it with the words, "Guess if you can," and a row of dots. Françoise and Madame Dumay ascribe this charming surprise to Butscha; but my dear Butscha is not rich enough to pay for such fine rubies! And my father, on my saying on Sunday evening that I had no whip, sent for that one from Rouen.'

Modeste pointed to a whip in her father's hand with a handle set closely with turquoises, a fashionable novelty then, but now rather common.

'I only wish, Mademoiselle—I would give ten years of my life to have the right of offering such a magnificent jewel,' replied the Duke politely.

'Ah! then here is the audacious man,' cried Modeste, seeing Canalis come up on horseback. 'None but a poet can find such exquisite things.—Monsieur,' she went on to Melchior, 'my father will be angry with you; you are justifying those who blame you for your extravagance.'

'Hah!' cried Canalis simply, 'then that is what took

La Brière from le Havre to Paris as fast as he could ride.'

'Your secretary took such a liberty!' said Modeste, turning pale, and flinging the whip to Françoise Cochet with a vehemence expressive of the deepest contempt. 'Give me back that whip, father!'

'The poor boy is lying on his bed broken with fatigue!' Melchior went on, as they followed the girl, who had gone off at a gallop. 'You are hard, Mademoiselle. "I have this chance alone of reminding her of my existence," was what he said.'

'And could you esteem a woman who was capable of preserving keepsakes from every comer?' said Modeste.

Modeste, who was surprised at receiving no reply from Canalis, ascribed his inattention to the sound of the horse's hoofs.

'How you delight in tormenting those who are in love with you!' said the Duke. 'Your pride and dignity so entirely belie your vagaries that I am beginning to suspect that you do yourself injustice by deliberately planning your malicious tricks.'

'What! you have just discovered that, Monsieur le Duc?' said she, with a laugh. 'You have exactly as much insight as a husband!'

For about a kilometre they rode on in silence. Modeste was surprised at being no longer aware of the flaming glances of Canalis, whose admiration for the beauties of the landscape seemed rather more than was natural. On the preceding evening Modeste had pointed out to the poet a beautiful effect of colour in the sunset over the sea, and, finding him as speechless as a mute, had said—

'Well, do not you see it all?'

'I see nothing but your hand,' he had replied.

'Does Monsieur de La Brière know how to ride?' Modeste asked, to pique him.

'He is not a very good horseman, but he goes,' replied

the poet, as cold as Gobenheim had been before the Colonel's return.

As they went along a cross-road, down which Monsieur Mignon turned to go through a pretty valley to a hill overlooking the course of the Seine, Canalis let Modeste and the Duke go forward, slackening his speed so as to bring his horse side by side with the Colonel's.

'Monsieur le Comte,' said he, 'you are a frank soldier, so you will regard my openness as a claim to your esteem. When an offer of marriage, with all the too barbarous, or, if you will, too civilised discussions to which it gives rise, is made through a third person, every one suffers. You and I are both men of perfect discretion, and you, like me, are past the age for surprises, so let us speak as man to man.—I will set the example. I am nine-and-twenty, I have no landed estate, I am an ambitious man. That I ardently admire Mademoiselle Modeste you must have seen. Now, in spite of the faults your charming daughter delights in affecting——'

'To say nothing of those she really has,' said the Colonel, smiling.

'I should be glad indeed to make her my wife, and I believe I could make her happy. The whole question of my future life turns on the point of fortune. Every girl who is open to marriage must be loved whatever comes of it; at the same time, you are not the man to get rid of your dear Modeste without a portion, and my position would no more allow of my marrying "for love," as the phrase is, than of my proposing to a girl without a fortune at least equal to my own. My salary, and some sinecures, with what I get from the Academy and my writings, come to about thirty thousand francs a year, a fine income for a bachelor. If my wife and I between us have sixty thousand francs a year, I could continue to live on much the same footing as at present. Have you a million francs to give Mademoiselle Modeste?'

'Oh! Monsieur, we are very far from any agreement,' said the Colonel jesuitically.

'Well, then, we have said nothing about the matter—only whistled,' said Canalis anxiously. 'You will be quite satisfied with my conduct, Monsieur le Comte; I shall be one more of the unfortunate men crushed by that charming young lady. Give me your word that you will say nothing of this to anybody, not even to Mademoiselle Modeste; for,' he added, by way of consolation, 'some change might occur in my position which would allow of my asking her hand without a settlement.'

'I swear it,' said the Colonel. 'You know, Monsieur, with what exaggerated language the public, in the provinces as in Paris, talk of fortunes made and lost. Success and failure are alike magnified, and we are never so lucky or so unlucky as report says. In business there is no real security but investment in land when cash transactions are settled. I am awaiting with anxious impatience the reports of my various agents; nothing is as yet concluded—neither the sale of my merchandise and my ship, nor my account with China. I shall not for the next ten months know the amount of my capital. However, in Paris, when talking to Monsieur de La Brière, I guaranteed a settlement on my daughter of two hundred thousand francs in money down. I intend to purchase a landed estate and settle it in tail on my grandchildren, obtaining for them a grant of my titles and coat-of-arms.'

After the first words of this speech Canalis had ceased to listen.

The four riders now came out on a wide road and rode abreast up to the plateau, which commands a view of the rich valley of the Seine towards Rouen, while on the other horizon they could still see the line of the sea.

'Butscha was indeed right, God is a great landscape maker,' said Canalis, as he looked down on the panorama,

unique among those for which the hills above the Seine are justly famous.

'But it is when out hunting, my dear Baron,' said the Duke, 'when nature is roused by a voice, by a stir in the silence, that the scenery, as we fly past, seems most really sublime with the rapid change of effect.'

'The sun has an inexhaustible palette,' said Modeste, gazing at the poet in a sort of bewilderment. On her making a remark as to the absence of mind she observed in Canalis, he replied that he was revelling in his own thoughts, an excuse which writers can make in addition to those common to other men.

'Are we really blest when we transfer our life to the centre of the world, and add to it a thousand factitious needs and over-wrought vanities?' said Modeste, as she contemplated the calm and luxuriant champaign which seemed to counsel philosophical quietude.

'Such bucolics, Mademoiselle, are always written on tables of gold,' said the poet.

'And imagined, perhaps, in a garret,' replied the Colonel.

Modeste gave Canalis a piercing look, and saw him flinch; there was a sound of bells in her ears; for a moment everything grew dark before her; then, in a hard, cold tone, she exclaimed—

'Ah! it is Wednesday!'

'It is not with the idea of flattering a merely transient fancy of yours, Mademoiselle,' said the Duc d'Hérouville solemnly—for this little scene, so tragical to Modeste, had given him time for thought—'but, I assure you, I am so utterly disgusted with the world, the Court, and Paris life, that, for my part, with a Duchesse d'Hérouville so full of charms and wit as you are, I could pledge myself to live like a philosopher in my château, doing good to those about me, reclaiming my alluvial flats, bringing up my children——'

'This shall be set down to your credit, Duke,' said

Modeste, looking steadily at the noble gentleman. 'You flatter me,' she added, 'for you do not think me frivolous, and you believe that I have enough resources in myself to live in solitude.—And that perhaps will be my fate,' she added, looking at Canalis with a compassionate expression.

'It is the lot of all small fortunes,' replied the poet. 'Paris requires Babylonian luxury. I sometimes wonder how I have managed to live till now.'

'The King is Providence to you and me,' said the Duke frankly, 'for we both live on His Majesty's bounty. If, since the death of Monsieur le Grand, as Cinq-Mars was called, we had not always held his office in our family, we should have had to sell Hérouville to be demolished by the *Bande Noire*. Believe me, Mademoiselle, it is to me a terrible humiliation to mix up financial considerations with the thought of marriage——'

The candour of this avowal, which came from the heart, and the sincerity of this regret, touched Modeste.

'In these days,' said the poet, 'nobody in France, Monsieur le Duc, is rich enough to commit the folly of marrying a woman for her personal merits, her charm, her character, or her beauty——'

The Colonel looked at Canalis with a strange expression, after studying his daughter, whose face no longer expressed any astonishment.

'Then for a man of honour,' he said, 'it is a noble use of riches to devote them to repair the ravages that time has wrought on our old historical families.'

'Yes, papa,' said the girl gravely.

The Colonel asked the Duke and Canalis to dine at the villa, without ceremony, in their riding dress, and set them the example by not changing his for dinner. When, on their return, Modeste went to change her dress, she looked curiously at the trinket that had come from Paris, and that she had so cruelly disdained.

'How exquisitely such work is done nowadays,' said she to Françoise Cochet, who was now her maid.

'And that poor young gentleman, Mademoiselle, ill of a fever——'

'Who told you so?'

'Monsieur Butscha. He came here just now to bid me say you had no doubt found out that he had kept his word on the day he named.'

Modeste went downstairs, dressed with queenly simplicity.

'My dear father,' said she, quite audibly, taking the Colonel's arm, 'will you go and ask after Monsieur de La Brière, and oblige me by taking back his present. You may put it to him that my small fortune, as well as my own taste, prohibits my using such toys as are fit only for a queen or a courtesan. Besides, I can only accept presents from the man I may hope to marry. Beg our excellent young friend to keep the whip till you find yourself rich enough to buy it of him.'

'Then my little girl is full of good sense!' said the Colonel, kissing her on the forehead.

Canalis took advantage of a conversation between the Duc d'Hérouville and Madame Mignon to go out on the terrace, where Modeste presently joined him, urged by curiosity, while he believed it was by her desire to become Madame Canalis. Somewhat alarmed at his own audacity in thus executing what a soldier would call 'right about face,' though, according to the jurisprudence of ambitious souls, every man in his place would have done the same, and just as suddenly, he tried to find some plausible reasons as he saw the ill-starred Modeste come out to him.

'Dear Modeste,' said he, in insinuating tones, 'as we are on such terms of friendship, will you be offended if I point out to you how painful your replies with regard to Monsieur d'Hérouville must be to a man who loves you, and, above all, to a poet, whose soul is a woman, is

all nerves, and suffering from the myriad jealousies of a genuine passion. I should be a poor diplomate indeed if I had not understood that your preliminary flirtations, your elaborate recklessness, were the outcome of a plan to study our characters——'

Modeste raised her head with a quick, intelligent, and pretty movement, of a type that may perhaps be traced to certain animals to which instinct gives wonderful grace.

'And so, thrown back on myself, I was no longer deceived by them. I marvelled at your subtle wit, in harmony with your character and your countenance. Be satisfied that I never imagined your assumed duplicity to be anything but an outer wrapper, covering the most adorable candour. No, your intelligence, your learning, have left untainted the exquisite innocence we look for in a wife. You are the very wife for a poet, a diplomatist, a thinker, a man fated to live through hazardous moments, and I admire you as much as I feel attached to you. I entreat you, unless you were merely playing with me yesterday when you accepted the pledges of a man whose vanity will turn to pride if he is chosen by you, whose faults will turn to virtues at your divine touch—I beseech you, do not crush the feeling he has indulged till it is a vice!

'Jealousy in me is a solvent, and you have shown me what its violence is; it is fearful; it eats into everything! Oh! it is not the jealousy of Othello!' said he, in reply to a movement on Modeste's part. 'No, no! I myself am in question; I am spoilt in this regard. You know of the one affection to which I owe the only form of happiness I have ever known—and that very incomplete (he shook his head).

'Love is depicted as a child by every nation, because it cannot be conceived of but as having all life before it. Well, this love of mine had its term fixed by nature; it was still-born. The most intuitive motherliness discerned and soothed this aching spot in my heart, for

a woman who feels—who sees—that she is dying to the joys of love, has angelic consideration; the duchess has never given me a pang of that kind. In ten years not a word, not a look, has failed of its mark. I attach more importance than ordinary people do to words, thoughts, and looks. To me a glance is an infinite possession, the slightest doubt is a mortal poison, and acts instantaneously: I cease to love. In my opinion—which is opposed to that of the vulgar, who revel in trembling, hoping, waiting—love ought to dwell in absolute assurance, childlike, infinite. To me the enchanting purgatory which women delight in inflicting on us with their caprices is an intolerable form of happiness which I will have nothing to say to; to me, love is heaven or hell. Hell I will not have; I feel that I am strong enough to endure the sempiternal blue of Paradise. I give myself unreservedly, I will have no secrets, no doubts, no delusions, in my future life, and I ask for reciprocity. Perhaps I offend you by doubting you! But, remember, I am speaking only of myself——'

'And a great deal,' said Modeste, hurt by all the lancet points of this harangue, in which the Duchesse de Chaulieu was used as a sledge-hammer, 'but it can never be too much; I have a habit of admiring you, my dear poet.'

'Well, then, can you promise me the dog-like fidelity I offer you? Is it not fine? Is it not what you wish for?'

'But why, my dear poet, do you not look for a wife who is dumb and blind and something of a fool? I am quite prepared to please my husband in all things; but you threaten to deprive a girl of the very happiness you promise her, to snatch it from her at the slightest movement, the slightest word, the slightest look! You cut the bird's wings and want to see it fly! I knew that poets were accused of inconsistency—Oh! quite unjustly,' she added, as Canalis protested by a gesture,

'for the supposed fault is merely the result of a vulgar misapprehension of the suddenness of their impulses. Still, I had not thought that a man of genius would devise the contradictory conditions of such a game, and then call it life! You insist on impossibilities just to have the pleasure of putting me in the wrong, like those enchanters who in fairy tales set tasks to persecuted damsels whom good fairies rescue——'

'In this case true love will be the fairy,' said Canalis, rather drily, seeing that his motive for a separation had been detected by the acute and delicate intelligence which Butscha had put on the scent.

'You, at this moment, my dear poet, are like those parents who inquire as to a girl's fortune before mentioning what their son's will be. You make difficulties with me, not knowing whether you have any right to do so. Love cannot be based on agreements discussed in cold blood. The poor Duke allows himself to be managed with all the submissiveness of Uncle Toby in Sterne's novel, with this difference, that I am not the widow Wadman, though bereaved at this moment of many illusions concerning poetry.—Yes! we hate to believe anything, we girls, that can overthrow our world of fancy!—I had been told all this beforehand!—Oh! you are trying to quarrel with me in a way unworthy of you! I cannot recognise the Melchior of yesterday.'

'Because Melchior has detected in you an ambition you still cherish——'

Modeste looked at Canalis from head to foot with an imperial glance.

'But I shall some day be an ambassador and a peer as he is——'

'You take me for a vulgar schoolgirl!' she said, as she went up the steps. But she turned hastily, and added in some confusion, for she felt suffocating—

'That is less insolent than taking me for a fool. The change in your demeanour is due to the nonsense current

in le Havre, which Françoise, my maid, has just repeated to me.'

'Oh, Modeste, can you believe that?' cried Canalis, with theatrical emphasis. 'Then you think that I want to marry you only for your fortune!'

'If I do you this injustice after your edifying remarks on the hills by the Seine, it lies with you to undeceive me, and thenceforth I will be what you would wish me to be,' said she, blighting him with her scorn.

'If you think you can catch me in that trap, my lady,' said the poet to himself as he followed her, 'you fancy me younger than I am. What an ado, to be sure, for a little slut for whose esteem I care no more than for that of the King of Borneo. However, by ascribing to me an ignoble motive she justifies my present attitude. Isn't she cunning?—La Brière will be saddled, like the little fool that he is; and five years hence we shall laugh at him well, she and I.'

The coolness produced by this dispute between Modeste and Canalis was obvious to all eyes that evening. Canalis withdrew early, on the pretext of La Brière's illness, leaving the field free to the Master of the Horse. At about eleven Butscha, who had come to escort Madame Latournelle home, said in an undertone to Modeste—

'Was I right?'

'Alas, yes!' said she.

'But have you done as we agreed, and left the door ajar so that he may return?'

'My anger was too much for me,' replied Modeste. 'Such meanness brought the blood to my head, and I told him my mind.'

'Well, so much the better! When you have quarrelled so that you cannot speak civilly to each other, even then I undertake to make him so devoted and pressing that you yourself are taken in by him.'

'Come, come, Butscha; he is a great poet, a gentleman, and a man of intellect.'

'Your father's eight millions will be more than all that.'

'Eight millions!' said Modeste.

'My master, who is selling his business, is setting out for Provence to look into Castagnould's investments as your father's agent. The sum-total of the contracts for repurchasing the lands of la Bastie amounts to four millions of francs, and your father has consented to every item. Your settlement is to be two millions, and the Colonel allows one for establishing you in Paris with a house and furniture. Calculate.'

'Ah, then I may be Duchesse d'Hérouville,' said Modeste, looking at Butscha.

'But for that ridiculous Canalis, you would have kept *his* whip, as sent by me,' said Butscha, putting in a word for La Brière.

'Monsieur Butscha, do you really expect me to marry the man you may choose?' said Modeste, laughing.

'That worthy young fellow loves as truly as I do; you loved him yourself for a week, and he is a man of genuine heart,' replied the clerk.

'And can he compete with a Crown appointment, do you think? There are but six—the High Almoner, the Chancellor, the Lord Chamberlain, the Master of the Horse, the High Constable, the High Admiral.—But there are no more Lords High Constable.'

'But in six months, Mademoiselle, the people, composed of an infinite number of malignant Butschas, may blow upon all this grandeur. Besides, what does nobility matter in these days? There are not a thousand real noblemen in France. The d'Hérouvilles are descended from an Usher of the Rod under Robert of Normandy. You will have many a vexation from those two knife-faced old maids.—If you are bent on being a Duchess—well, you belong to Franche

Comté, the Pope will have at least as much consideration for you as for the tradespeople, he will sell you a duchy ending in *nia* or *agno*.—Do not trifle with your happiness for the sake of a Crown appointment!'

The reflections indulged in by Canalis during the night were all satisfactory. He could imagine nothing in the world worse than the situation of a married man without a fortune. Still tremulous at the thought of the danger he had been led into by his vanity, which he had pledged, as it were, to Modeste by his desire to triumph over the Duc d'Hérouville, and by his belief in Monsieur Mignon's millions, he began to wonder what the Duchesse de Chaulieu must be thinking of his stay at le Havre, aggravated by five days' cessation from letter-writing, whereas in Paris they wrote each other four or five notes a week.

'And the poor woman is struggling to get me promoted to be Commander of the Legion of Honour, and to the place of Minister to the Grand Duchy of Baden!' cried he.

Forthwith, with the prompt decisiveness which in poets, as in speculators, is the result of a clear intuition of the future, he sat down and wrote the following letter:—

To Madame la Duchesse de Chaulieu.

'MY DEAR ELÉONORE,—You are no doubt astonished at having had no news of me, but my stay here is not merely a matter of health; I also have had to do my duty in some degree to our little friend La Brière. The poor boy has fallen desperately in love with a certain Demoiselle Modeste de La Bastie, a little pale-faced, insignificant thread-paper of a girl, who, by the way, has as a vice a mania for literature, and calls herself poetical to justify the whims, the tantrums, and changes of a pretty bad temper. You know Ernest, he is so

easily made a fool of, that I would not trust him alone. Mademoiselle de La Bastie set up a strange flirtation with your Melchior; she was very well inclined to be your rival, though she has lean arms and scraggy shoulders, like most young girls, hair more colourless than Madame de Rochefide's, and a very doubtful expression in her little grey eye. I pulled up this Immodeste's advances pretty short—perhaps rather too roughly; but that is the way of an absorbing passion. What do I care for all the women on earth, who, all put together, are not worth you?

'The people with whom we spend our time, who surround this heiress, are *bourgeois* enough to make one sick. Pity me; I spend my evenings with notaries' clerks, their wives, their cashiers, and a provincial money-lender; wide indeed is the gulf between this and the evenings in the Rue de Grenelle. The father's trumped-up fortune—he has just come home from China—has secured us the company of that omnipresent suitor the Master of the Horse, hungrier for millions than ever, since it will cost six or seven, they say, to reclaim and work the much-talked-of alluvion of Hérouville. The King has no idea what a fatal gift he has made to the little Duke. His Grace, who does not suspect how small a fortune his hoped-for father-in-law possesses, is jealous only of me. La Brière is making his way with his idol under cover of his friend, who serves as a screen.

'In spite of Ernest's raptures, I, the poet, think of the substantial; and the information I have gathered as to the gentleman's wealth casts a gloomy hue over our secretary's prospects, for his lady-love has sharp enough teeth to eat a hole in any fortune. Now, if my angel would redeem some of our sins, she would try to find out the truth about this matter, by sending for her banker, Mongenod, and cross-questioning him with the skill that distinguishes her. Monsieur Charles Mignon, formerly a Colonel in the Cavalry of the Imperial Guard,

has for seven years been in constant communication with Mongenod's house. They talk here of two hundred thousand francs in settlement, at most; and before making an offer in form for the young lady on Ernest's behalf, I should be glad to have positive data. As soon as the good folks are agreed, I return to Paris. I know a way of bringing the business to a satisfactory conclusion for our lover. All that is needed is to secure permission for Monsieur Mignon's son-in-law to take his title of Count, and no man is more likely to obtain such a grant than Ernest, in view of his services, especially when seconded by us three—you, the Duke, and myself. With his tastes, Ernest, who will undoubtedly rise to be a Master of the Exchequer, will be perfectly happy living in Paris if he is certain of twenty-five thousand francs a year, a permanent office, and a wife—poor wretch!

'Oh, my dear! how I long to see the Rue de Grenelle again! A fortnight's absence, when it does not kill love, revives the ardour of its early days, and you know, better perhaps than I, all the reasons that make my love eternal. My bones in the tomb will love you still! Indeed, I cannot hold out! If I am compelled to remain ten days longer, I must go to Paris for a few hours.

'Has the Duke got me rope to hang myself? And you, dear life, shall you have to take the Baden waters this season? The cooing of our *beau ténébreux*, as compared with the accents of happy love—always the same, and true to itself for nearly ten years past—has given me a deep contempt of marriage; I had never seen all this so close to my eyes before. Ah! my dear, what is called wrongdoing is a far closer tie between two souls than the law—is it not?'

This idea served as the text for two pages of reminiscences and of aspirations of too private a nature for publication.

On the day before Canalis posted this letter, Butscha, who wrote under the name of Jean Jacmin to his imaginary cousin Philoxène, had sent off his answer twelve hours in advance of the poet's letter. The Duchess, for the last fortnight extremely alarmed and offended by Melchior's silence, had dictated Philoxène's letter to her cousin ; and now, after reading the clerk's reply—somewhat too decisive for the vanity of a lady of fifty—had made minute inquiries as to Colonel Mignon's fortune. Finding herself betrayed, deserted for money, Éléonore gave herself up to a paroxysm of rage, hatred, and cold malignancy. Philoxène, knocking at the door of her mistress's luxurious room, on going in, found her with tears in her eyes, and stood amazed at this unprecedented phenomenon, which she had never before seen during fifteen years of service.

'We expiate the happiness of ten years in ten minutes!' exclaimed the Duchess.

'A letter from le Havre, Madame.'

Éléonore read Canalis' effusion of prose without observing Philoxène's presence, and the maid's surprise was heightened as she saw the Duchess's face recover its serenity as she read the letter. If you hold out to a drowning man a pole as thick as a walking stick, he will regard it as the king's highway to safety ; and so the happy Éléonore believed in the poet's good faith as she perused these sheets in which love and business, lies and truth, elbowed each other.

Just now, when the banker had left her, she had sent for her husband to hinder Melchior's promotion if there were time yet ; but a generous regret came over her that rose to a sublime impulse.

'Poor boy!' thought she, 'he has not the smallest thought of ill. He loves me as he did the first day ; he tells me everything.—Philoxène!' said she, noticing her head maid loitering about, and affecting to arrange the toilet-table.

'Madame la Duchesse?'

'My hand-glass, child.'

Éléonore looked at herself, noted the razor-fine lines grooving her forehead, but invisible at a distance; and she sighed, for she believed that in that sigh she was taking leave of love. Then she had a man's thought, above the pettiness of woman—a thought which is sometimes intoxicating; an intoxication which may perhaps account for the clemency of the Semiramis of the North when she made her young and lovely rival Momonoff's wife.

'Since he has not failed me, I will get the millions and the girl for him,' thought she, 'if this little Mademoiselle Mignon is as plain as he says she is.'

Three knocks, delicately rapped out, announced the Duke, for whom his wife herself opened the door.

'Ah! you are better, my dear,' cried he, with the assumed gladness that courtiers so well know how to put on, and by which simpletons are taken in.

'My dear Henri,' said she, 'it is really inconceivable that you should not by this time have secured Melchior's appointment, after sacrificing yourself for the King during your year's ministry, knowing that it would scarcely endure so long!'

The Duke glanced at Philoxène; and the maid, by an almost imperceptible jerk of the head, showed him the letter from le Havre on the dressing-table. 'You would be bored to death in Germany, and quarrel with Melchior before your return,' said the Duke artlessly.

'Why?'

'Well, would you not always be together?' replied the erewhile Ambassador with comical candour.

'Oh! no,' said she; 'I mean to get him married.'

'If d'Hérouville is to be believed, our dear Canalis has not waited for your good offices,' replied the Duke, smiling. 'Grandlieu yesterday read me some passages of a letter to him from the Master of the Horse, which was no

doubt edited by his aunt to come to your ears; for Mademoiselle d'Hérouville, always on the look-out for a fortune, knows that Grandlieu and I play whist together almost every evening. That good little d'Hérouville invites the Prince de Cadignan to a Royal Hunt in Normandy, begging him to persuade the King to go, so as to turn the damsel's head when she finds herself the object of such a chivalrous procession. In fact, two words from Charles x. would settle everything. D'Hérouville says the girl is incomparably lovely.'

'Henri, let us go to le Havre!' cried the Duchess, interrupting her husband.

'But on what excuse?' said he gravely—a man who had been in the intimate confidence of Louis xviii.

'I never saw a hunt.'

'That would be all very well if the King should be there, but to go so far for a hunt would be ridiculous; and he will not go, I have just spoken to him about it.'

'Madame perhaps would go——'

'That is a better plan,' said the Duke; 'and the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse may help you to get her away from Rosny. Then the King would make no objection to his hounds being taken out.—But do not go to le Havre, my dear,' said the Duke, in a paternal tone; 'it would make you conspicuous. Look here; this, I think, will be a better plan. Gaspard has his Château of Rosembray on the further side of the forest of Brotonne; why not give him a hint to receive all the party there?'

'Through whom?'

'Why, his wife the Duchess, who attends the Holy Table with Mademoiselle d'Hérouville, might ask Gaspard to do it if the old maid hinted it to her.'

'You are the dearest man!' said Éléonore. 'I will write two lines to the old lady, and to Diane; for we must have hunting-suits made. The little hat, now I think of it, makes one look very much younger.—Did you win yesterday at the English Embassy?'

'Yes,' said the Duke; 'I wiped out my score.'

'And, above all, Henri, set everything aside till Melchior's two promotions are settled.'

After writing a few lines to the fair Diane de Maufrigneuse, and a note to Mademoiselle d'Hérouville, Éléonore flung this reply like the smack of a horse-whip across Canalis' lies:—

To Monsieur le Baron de Canalis.

'My dear Poet,—Mademoiselle de La Bastie is beautiful; Mongenod assures me that her father has eight millions of francs; I had thought of making her your wife, so I am deeply annoyed by your want of confidence in me. If before you started for le Havre, you aimed at getting La Brière married to her, I cannot imagine your not telling me so plainly before you went. And why pass a fortnight without writing a line to a friend so easily alarmed as I am?

'Your letter came a little late; I had already seen the banker. You are a child, Melchior; you try to be cunning with us. That is not right. Even the Duke is amazed at your behaviour; he thinks you not quite gentlemanly—which casts a doubt on the virtue of your lady mother.

'Now, I want to see things for myself. I shall, I believe, have the honour of attending Madame to the hunt arranged by the Duc d'Hérouville for Mademoiselle de La Bastie. I will contrive that you shall be invited to stay at Rosembray, as the hunt will probably take place at the Duc de Verneuil's.

'Believe me, none the less, my dear poet, your friend for life,

Éléonore.'

'There, Ernest,' said Canalis, tossing this letter, which arrived at breakfast time, across the table in La Brière's

face. 'That is the two thousandth love-letter I have received from that woman, and there is not one single *tu*. The noble Eléonore never compromised herself further than what you find there.—Get married, and make haste about it! The worst marriage in the world is more tolerable than the lightest of these halters.—Well, I am the veriest Nicodemus that ever dropped from the moon. Modeste has millions; she is lost to me for ever; for no one ever comes back from the poles, where we now are, to the tropics, where we dwelt three days ago! Besides, I have all the more reason to wish for your triumph over the little Duke, because I told the Duchesse de Chaulieu that I came here only for your sake; so now I shall work for you.'

'Alas! Melchior, Modeste must need have so superior, so mature a character, and such a noble mind, to resist the spectacle of the Court, and all the splendour so skilfully displayed in her honour and glory by the Duke, that I cannot believe in the existence of such perfection; and yet—if she is still the Modeste of her letters, there may be a hope——'

'You are a happy fellow, young Boniface, to see the world and your lady-love through such green spectacles!' exclaimed Canalis, going out to walk in the garden.

The poet, caught between two falsehoods, could not make up his mind what to do next.

'Play the game by the rules, and you lose!' cried he, as he sat in the summer-house. 'Every man of sense would undoubtedly have acted as I did four days ago, and have crept out of the trap in which I found myself. For in such a case you don't wait to untie the knots; you break through everything!—Come, I must be cold, calm, dignified, hurt. Honour will not allow of any other demeanour. English rigidity is the only way to recover Modeste's respect. After all, if I only get out of the scrape by falling back on my old felicity, my ten years'

fidelity will be rewarded. Eléonore will find me a suitable match.'

The hunt was destined to be the rallying point of all the passions brought into play by the Colonel's fortune and his daughter's beauty. There was a sort of truce among the contending parties during the few days needed to prepare this solemn act of forestry; the drawing-room in the Villa Mignon had the peaceful appearance of a very united family party. Canalis, intrenched in his part of a much-injured man, made a display of courtesy; he put aside his pretentiousness, gave no more specimens of oratorical talent, and was charming, as clever men are when they shed their affectations. He discussed the money-market with Gobenheim, war with the Colonel, Germany with Madame Mignon, and housekeeping with Madame Latournelle, trying to win them over to La Brière. The Duc d'Hérouville frequently left the field free to the two friends, as he was obliged to go to Rosembray to consult the Duc de Verneuil and superintend the execution of the orders issued by the Master of the Hounds, the Prince de Cadignan.

Meanwhile, the comic element was not lacking. Modeste found herself between the disparagement Canalis tried to cast on the Duke's gallant attentions, and the exaggerated views of the two demoiselles d'Hérouville, who came every evening. Canalis pointed out to Modeste that, far from being the heroine of the day, she would be scarcely noticed. MADAME would be attended by the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse, the daughter-in-law of the Master of the Hounds, by the Duchesse de Chaulieu, and some other ladies of the Court, and among them a mere girl would produce no sensation. Some officers would, no doubt, be invited from the garrison at Rouen, etc. Hélène was never tired of repeating to the girl, whom she looked upon as her sister-in-law, that she

would, of course, be presented to MADAME; that the Duc de Verneuil would certainly invite her and her father to stay at Rosembray; that if the Colonel had any favour to ask of the King—such as a peerage—this would be an unique opportunity, for they did not despair of getting the King there on the third day; that she would be surprised at the charming reception she would meet with from the handsomest women of the Court, the Duchesses de Chaulieu, de Maufrigneuse, de Lenoncourt-Chaulieu, etc.; Modeste's prejudices against the Faubourg Saint-Germain would disappear—and so forth, and so forth. It was a most amusing little warfare, with its marches and counter marches and strategy, which the Dumays, the Latournelles, Gobenheim and Butscha looked on at, and enjoyed, saying among themselves all manner of hard things about the nobility, as they watched their elaborate, cruel, and studied meanness.

The assurances of the d'Hérouville faction were justified by an invitation, in the most flattering terms, from the Duc de Verneuil and the Master of the King's Hounds to Monsieur le Comte de La Bastie and his daughter to be present at a Royal Hunt at Rosembray on the 7th, 8th, 9th, and 10th of November.

La Brière, oppressed by gloomy presentiments, revelled in Modeste's presence in that spirit of concentrated avidity whose bitter joys are known only to lovers irrevocably and for ever discarded. The flashes of happiness in his inmost self, mingled with melancholy reflections on the same theme, 'She is lost to me!' made the poor youth a pathetic spectacle, all the more touching because his countenance and person were in harmony with this depth of feeling. There is nothing more poetical than such a living elegy that has eyes, that walks, and sighs without rhyming.

Finally, the Duc d'Hérouville came to arrange for Modeste's journey. After crossing the Seine, she was to proceed in the Duke's travelling carriage with his aunt

and sister. The Duke was perfect in his courtesy; he invited Canalis and la Brière, telling them, as he told Monsieur Mignon, that they would find hunters at their service.

The Colonel asked his daughter's three lovers to breakfast on the day of the departure. Then Canalis tried to execute a scheme that had ripened in his mind during the last few days—namely, to reconquer Modeste, and to trick the Duchess, the Master of the Horse, and La Brière. A graduate in diplomacy could not remain bogged in such a position as that in which he found himself. La Brière, on his part, had made up his mind to bid Modeste an eternal farewell. Thus each suitor, as he foresaw the conclusion of a struggle that had been going on for three weeks, proposed to put in a last word, like a pleader to the judge before sentence is pronounced.

After dinner the day before, the Colonel took his daughter by the arm and impressed on her the necessity for coming to a decision.

'Our position with the d'Hérouville family would be intolerable at Rosembray. Do you want to be a duchess?' he asked Modeste.

'No, father,' she replied.

'Then do you really love Canalis——?'

'Certainly not, papa; a thousand times, no!' said she, with childish irritability.

The Colonel looked at her with a sort of glee.

'Ah! I have not influenced you,' cried the kind father. 'But I may tell you now that even in Paris I had chosen my son-in-law when, on my impressing on him that I had no fortune, he threw his arms round me, saying that I had lifted a hundredweight from his heart.'

'Of whom are you speaking?' asked Modeste, colouring.

'Of the man of solid virtues and sound morals,' said he, mockingly repeating the phrase which, on the day after his return, had scattered Modeste's dreams.

'Oh, I am not thinking of him, papa! Leave me free to refuse the Duke myself; I know him, I know how to soothe him——'

'Then your choice is not made?'

'Not yet. I still have to guess a few syllables in the riddle of my future; but after having had a glimpse of the Court, I will tell you all my secret at Rosembray.'

'You will join the hunt, will you not?' said the Colonel to Ernest, whom he saw coming down the path where he was walking with Modeste.

'No, Colonel,' replied Ernest. 'I have come to take leave of you and of Mademoiselle. I am going back to Paris.'

'You have no curiosity?' said Modeste, interrupting him, and looking at the bashful youth.

'Nothing is needed to keep me,' said he, 'but the expression of a wish I hardly hope for.'

'If that is all, it will give me pleasure, at any rate,' said the Colonel, as he went forward to meet Canalis, leaving his daughter alone for a moment with the hapless Ernest.

'Mademoiselle,' said the young man, looking up at her with the courage of despair; 'I have a petition to make.'

'To me?'

'Let me depart forgiven! My life can never be happy; I must endure the remorse of having lost my happiness, by my own fault no doubt; but at least——'

'Before we part for ever,' replied Modeste, interrupting him *à la* Canalis, 'I want to know one thing only; and though you once assumed a disguise, I do not think that you will now be such a coward as to deceive me——'

At the word 'coward' Ernest turned pale.

'You are merciless!' he exclaimed.

'Will you be frank with me?'

'You have the right to ask me such a humiliating question,' said he, in a voice made husky by the violent beating of his heart.

'Well, then, did you read my letters out to Monsieur de Canalis?'

'No, Mademoiselle; and though I gave them to the Colonel to read, it was only to justify my love, by showing him how my affection had had birth, and how genuine my efforts had been to cure you of your fancy.'

'But what put this ignoble masquerading into your head?' she asked, with a kind of impatience.

La Brière related, in all its details, the scene to which Modeste's first letter had given rise, and the challenge which had resulted from Ernest's high opinion in favour of a young lady yearning for glory, as a plant strives for its share of the sunshine.

'Enough,' said Modeste, concealing her agitation. 'If you have not my heart, Monsieur, you have my highest esteem.'

This simple speech made La Brière quite dizzy. He felt himself totter, and leaned against a shrub, like a man whose senses are failing him. Modeste, who had walked away, turned her head and hastily came back.

'What is the matter?' she exclaimed, taking him by the hand to save him from falling.

Modeste felt his hand like ice, and saw a face as white as a lily; all the blood had rushed to his heart.

'Forgive me, Mademoiselle,—I had fancied myself so despised——'

'Well,' said she, with haughty scorn, 'I did not say that I loved you.'

And she again left La Brière, who, notwithstanding this hard speech, thought he was walking on the upper air. The earth felt soft beneath his feet, the trees seemed decked with flowers, the sky was rosy, and the air blue, as in the temples of Hymen at the close of a fairy drama that ends happily. In such circumstances, women are Janus-like, they see what is going on behind them without turning round; and Modeste saw in her lover's expression the unmistakable symptoms of a love


MURRAY SMITH

such as Butscha's, which is beyond a doubt the *ne plus ultra* of a woman's desire. And the high value attached by La Brière to her esteem was to Modeste an infinitely sweet experience.

'Mademoiselle,' said Canalis, leaving the Colonel, and coming to meet Modeste, 'in spite of the small interest you take in my sentiments, it is a point of honour with me to wipe out a stain from which I have too long suffered. Here is what the Duchess wrote to me five days after my arrival here.'

He made Modeste read the first few lines of the letter, in which the Duchess said that she had seen Mongenod, and wished that Melchior should marry Modeste; then having torn off the rest, he placed them in her hand.

'I cannot show you the remainder,' said he, putting the paper in his pocket; 'but I intrust these few lines to your delicacy, that you may be able to verify the handwriting. The girl who could ascribe to me such ignoble sentiments is quite capable of believing in some collusion, some stratagem. This may prove to you how much I care to convince you that the difference between us was not based on the vilest interest on my part. Ah! Modeste,' he went on, with tears in his voice, 'your poet—Madame de Chaulieu's poet—has not less poetry in his heart than in his mind. You will see the Duchess; suspend your judgment of me till then.' And he left Modeste quite disconcerted.

'On my word! They are all angels,' said she to herself. 'All too fine for marriage! Only the Duke is a human being.'

'Mademoiselle Modeste, this hunt makes me very uneasy,' said Butscha, appearing on the scene with a parcel under his arm. 'I dreamed that your horse ran away with you, so I have been to Rouen to get you a Spanish snaffle; I have been told that a horse can never get it between his teeth. I implore you to use it; I

have shown it to the Colonel, who has thanked me more than the thing is worth.'

'Poor dear Butscha!' cried Modeste, touched to tears by this motherly care.

Butscha went off skipping like a man who has suddenly heard of the death of an old uncle leaving a fortune.

'My dear father,' said Modeste, on returning to the drawing-room, 'I should like very much to have that handsome whip; supposing you were to offer to exchange with Monsieur de La Brière—that whip for your picture by Ostade?'

Modeste cast a side glance at Ernest while the Colonel made this proposal, standing in front of the picture—the only thing he possessed as a memorial of the campaigns he had fought in; he had bought it of a citizen of Ratisbon. And seeing the eagerness with which Ernest rushed from the room, 'He will attend the hunt,' said she to herself.

Thus, strange to say, Modeste's three lovers all went to Rosembray with hearts full of hope, and enraptured by her adorable charms.

Rosembray, an estate recently purchased by the Duc de Verneuil with the money that fell to his share of the thousand million francs voted to legitimise the sale of national property, is remarkable for a château comparable for magnificence with those of Mesnière and Balleroy. This noble and imposing mansion is reached by an immense avenue of ancestral elms four rows deep, and across a vast courtyard on a slope, like that of Versailles, with a splendid iron screen and two gate lodges, and surrounded by large orange trees in tubs. The façade to this *cour d'honneur* displays two stories of nineteen windows in each, between two wings at right angles—tall windows with small panes, set in carved stone arches, and separated by reeded pilasters. A cornice and balus-

trade screen an Italian roof, whence rise stone chimneys marked by trophies of arms, Rosembray having been built in the reign of Louis XIV. by a farmer-general named Cottin. The front towards the park differs from this, having a centre block of five windows projecting from the main building, with columns and a noble pediment. The Marigny family, to whom the possessions of this Cottin came by marriage with his sole heiress, had a group representing Dawn executed for this pediment by Coysevox. Below it two genii support a scroll, on which this motto is inscribed in honour of the King, instead of the old family device: *Sol nobis benignus*. The great Louis had made a Duke of the Marquis de Marigny, one of his most insignificant favourites.

From the top of the semicircular double flight of steps there is a view over a large lake, as long and wide as the grand canal of Versailles, starting from the bottom of a slope of turf worthy of the most English lawn, its banks dotted with clumps displaying the brightest autumn flowers. Beyond, on each side, a French formal parterre spreads its squared beds and paths — pages written in the most majestic style of Le Nôtre. These two gardens are set in a border of wood and shrubbery, extending the whole length to the extent of thirty acres, and cleared in places in the English fashion under Louis XV. The view from the terrace is shut in beyond by a forest belonging to Rosembray, adjoining two demesnes, one belonging to the nation, and one to the Crown. It would be hard to find a more beautiful landscape.

Modeste's arrival caused some sensation in the avenue when the carriage was seen with the royal livery of France, escorted by the Master of the Horse, the Colonel, Canalis, and La Brière, all riding, and preceded by an outrider in the Royal livery; behind them came ten servants, among them the Colonel's negro and mulatto, and his elegant britska, in which were the two

ladies' maids and the luggage. The first carriage was drawn by four horses mounted by *tigers*, dressed with the spruce perfection insisted on by the Master of the Horse —often better served in such matters than the King himself.

Modeste, as she drove up and saw this minor Versailles, was dazzled by the magnificence of these great folks; she was suddenly conscious of having to meet these famous Duchesses; she dreaded seeming affected, provincial, or parvenu, lost her head completely, and repented of ever having wished for this hunting party.

When the carriage stopped, Modeste happily saw before her an old man in a fair, frizzy wig, with small curls, whose calm, smooth, full face wore a paternal smile and an expression of monastic joviality, to which a half downcast look lent something like dignity. The Duchess, a woman of deep devotion, the only daughter of a very wealthy President of the Supreme Court, who had died in 1800, was the mother of four children; very thin and erect, she bore some resemblance to Madame Latournelle, if imagination could be persuaded to embellish the lawyer's wife with the graces of a noble lady-Prioress.

'Ah! how do you do, dear Hortense?' said Mademoiselle d'Hérouville, embracing the Duchess with all the sympathy that was a tie between these two proud spirits; 'allow me to introduce to you and to our dear Duke, Mademoiselle de La Bastie, who is a little angel.'

'We have heard so much about you, Mademoiselle,' said the Duchess, 'that we have been most eager to have you here.'

'We can but regret our lost time,' added the Duc de Verneuil, bowing with gallant admiration.

'Monsieur le Comte de La Bastie,' added the Master of the Horse, taking the Colonel by the arm, and leading him up to the Duke and Duchess with a tinge of respect in his tone and manner.

The Colonel bowed to the Duchess, the Duke gave him his hand.

'You are very welcome, Monsieur le Comte,' said Monsieur de Verneuil. 'You are the owner of many treasures,' he added, glancing at Modeste.

The Duchess drew Modeste's hand through her arm and led her into a vast drawing-room, where half a score of women were sitting in groups round the fire. The men, led by the Duke, went to walk on the terrace, excepting only Canalis, who went in to pay his respects to the superb Éléonore. She, seated before a tapestry frame, was giving Mademoiselle de Verneuil some hints as to shading.

If Modeste had thrust her finger through with a needle when laying her hand on a cushion, she could not have felt a keener shock than she received from the icy glance, haughty and contemptuous, that the Duchesse de Chaulieu bestowed on her. From the first instant she saw no one but this woman, and guessed who she was. To know to what a pitch the cruelty can go of those sweet creatures who are exalted by our passion, women must be seen together. Modeste might have disarmed any one but Éléonore by her amazed and involuntary admiration; for if she had not known her rival's age, she would have taken her to be a woman of six-and-thirty; but there were greater surprises in store for her!

The poet found himself flung against the wrath of a great lady. Such anger is the most ruthless Sphinx; the face is beaming, all else is savage. Even kings do not know how to reduce the stronghold of exquisitely cold politeness which a mistress can then hide under steel armour. The lovely woman's countenance smiles, and at the same time the steel strikes home: the hand is of steel, the arm, the body, all is steel. Canalis tried to clutch this steel, but his fingers slipped over it as his words slipped from her heart. And the gracious face, the gracious phrases, the gracious manners of the Duchess, concealed

from every eye the steel of her cold fury—down to twenty-five degrees below zero. The sight of Modeste's supreme beauty, heightened by her journey, the appearance of the girl, as well dressed as Diane de Maufrigneuse, had fired the powders that reflection had stored up in Éléonore's brain.

All the women had gone to the window to see the wonder of the day step out of the carriage, followed by her three lovers.

'Do not let us show that we are so curious,' said Madame de Chaulieu, struck to the heart by Diane's exclamation, 'She is divine! Where can such a creature have dropped from?'

And they had fled back to the drawing-room, where each one had composed her countenance, while the Duchesse de Chaulieu felt in her heart a thousand vipers all crying at once to be satisfied.

Mademoiselle d'Hérouville remarked in an undertone, and with marked meaning, to the Duchesse de Verneuil—

'Éléonore is not cordial in her reception of her great Melchior.'

'The Duchesse de Maufrigneuse thinks that there is a coolness between them,' replied Laure de Verneuil simply. This phrase, so often spoken in the world of fashion, is full of meaning. We feel in it the icy polar blast.

'Why?' asked Modeste of the charming girl who had left the Convent of the Sacred Heart not more than two months since.

'The great man,' replied the Duchess, signing to her daughter to be silent, 'left her for a fortnight without writing a word to her, after setting out for le Havre, and saying that he had gone for his health.'

Modeste gave a little start which struck Laure, Hélène, and Mademoiselle d'Hérouville.

'And meanwhile,' the devout Duchess went on, 'she was getting him appointed Commander of the Legion of Honour and Minister to Baden.'

'Oh, it is very wrong of Canalis, for he owes everything to her,' said Mademoiselle d'Hérouville.

'Why did not Madame de Chaulieu come to le Havre?' asked Modeste guilelessly of Hélène.

'My child,' said the Duchesse de Verneuil, 'she would let herself be killed without speaking a word. Look at her. What a queen! With her head on the block she would still smile, like Mary Stuart—indeed, our handsome Éléonore has the same blood in her veins.'

'And she did not write to him?' said Modeste.

'Diane told me,' replied the Duchess, prompted to further confidences by an elbow nudge from Mademoiselle d'Herouville, 'that she had sent a very cutting answer to the first letter Canalis wrote to her about ten days ago.'

This statement made Modeste colour with shame for Canalis; she longed not to crush him under her feet, but to revenge herself by a piece of mischief more cruel than a poniard thrust. She looked proudly at Madame de Chaulieu. That glance was gilded with eight millions of francs.

'Monsieur Melchior!' said she.

All the women looked up, first at the Duchess, who was talking to Canalis over the work-frame, then at this young girl, so ill bred as to disturb two lovers who were settling their quarrel—a thing which is never done in any rank of life.

Diane de Maufrigneuse gave her head a little toss, as much as to say, 'The child is in her rights.'

Finally, the twelve women smiled at each other, for they were all jealous of a woman of fifty-six who was still handsome enough to dip her hand in the common treasury and steal a young woman's share. Melchior glanced at Modeste with feverish irritability, the hasty look of a master to a servant, while the Duchess bent her head with the air of a lioness interrupted at her meal; her eyes, fixed on the canvas, shot flames of fire, almost

red-hot, at the poet while she sifted his very soul with her epigrams, for each sentence was a vengeance for a triple injury.

'Monsieur Melchior!' repeated Modeste, in a voice that asserted its right to be heard.

'What is it, Mademoiselle?' asked the poet.

He was obliged to rise, but he stood still halfway between the work-frame, which was near the window, and the fireplace, by which Modeste was sitting on the Duchesse de Verneuil's sofa. What cruel reflections were forced on the ambitious man when he met Éléonore's steady eye. If he should obey Modeste, all was over for ever between the poet and his protectress. If he paid no heed to the girl, it would be an avowal of his serfdom, he would lose the advantages gained by five-and-twenty days of meanness, and fail in the simplest rules of gentlemanly politeness. The greater the folly, the more im peratively the Duchess insisted on it. Modeste's beauty and fortune, set in the opposite scale to Éléonore's influence and established rights, made this hesitancy between the man and his honour as terrible to watch as the peril of a matador in the ring. A man never knows such frightful palpitations as those that seemed to threaten Canalis with an aneurism, anywhere but in front of the gaming-table, where his fortune or his ruin is settled within five minutes.

'Mademoiselle d'Hérouville made me get out of the carriage in such a hurry,' said Modeste to Canalis, 'that I dropped my handkerchief——'

Canalis gave a highly significant shrug.

'And,' she went on, in spite of this impatient gesture, 'I had, tied to it, the key of a blotting case, containing an important fragment of a letter; will you be good enough, Melchior, to ask for it——'

Between an angel and a tigress, equally irate, Canalis, who had turned pale, hesitated no longer; the tigress seemed the less dangerous. He was on the point of

committing himself when La Brière appeared in the doorway, seeming to Canalis something like the archangel Michael descended from heaven.

'Here, Ernest, Mademoiselle de La Bastie wants you,' said the poet, hastily retreating to his chair by the work-frame.

Ernest, on his part, went at once to Modeste without bowing to any one else; he saw her alone, received her instructions with visible joy, and ran off with the unconfessed approbation of every woman present.

'What a position for a poet!' said Modeste to Hélène, pointing to the worsted work at which the Duchess was stitching furiously.

'If you speak to her, if you once look at her, all is ended,' said Éléonore to Melchior in a low tone, for his *mezzo termine* had not satisfied her. 'And, mind, when I am absent I shall leave other eyes to watch you.'

As she spoke, Madame de Chaulieu, a woman of medium height, but rather too fat—as all women are who are still handsome when past fifty—rose, walked towards the group with which Diane de Maufrigneuse was sitting, stepping out with small feet as firm and light as a fawn's. Under her full forms the exquisite refinement was conspicuous with which women of that type are gifted, and which gives them that vigorous nervous system that controls and animates the development of the flesh. It was impossible otherwise to account for her light step, which was amazingly dignified. Only those women whose quarterings of nobility date back to Noah, like Éléonore's, know how to be majestic in spite of being as large as a farmer's wife. A philosopher might, perhaps, have pitied Philoxène, while admiring the happy arrangement of the bodice and the careful details of a morning dress worn with the elegance of a queen and the ease of a girl. Boldly wearing her own abundant and undyed hair, plaited on the top of her head in a coronet like a tower, Éléonore proudly displayed her

white neck, her finely shaped bust and shoulders, her dazzling bare arms, ending in hands famous for their beauty. Modeste, like all the Duchess's rivals, saw in her one of those women of whom the others say, 'She is past mistress of us all!'

In fact, every one recognised her as one of those few great ladies who are now become so rare in France. Any attempt to describe how majestic was the carriage of her head, how refined and delicate this or that curve of her neck, what harmony there was in her movements, what dignity in her mien, what nobleness in the perfect agreement of every detail with the whole result in the little arts that are a second nature, and make a woman holy and supreme,—this would be to try to analyse the sublime. We delight in such poetry, as in that of Paganini, without seeking the means, for the cause is a soul making itself visible.

The Duchess bowed, saluting Hélène and her aunt; then she said to Diane in a clear, bright voice without a trace of emotion—

'Is it not time to dress, Duchess?'

And she swept out of the room, accompanied by her daughter-in-law and Mademoiselle d'Hérouville, each giving her an arm. She was speaking in a low voice as she went away with the old maid, who pressed her to her heart, saying, 'You are quite charming!' which was as much as to say, 'I am wholly yours in return for the service you have just done us.'

Mademoiselle d'Hérouville returned to the drawing-room to play her part as spy, and her first glance told Canalis that the Duchess's last words were no vain threat. The apprentice to diplomacy felt he knew too little of this minor science for so severe a struggle, and his wit served him at any rate so far as to enable him to assume a straightforward, if not a dignified attitude. When Ernest returned with Modeste's handkerchief, he took him by the arm and led him out on the lawn.

'My dear fellow,' said he, 'I am, of all men, not the most unhappy, but the most ridiculous. So I have recourse to you to help me out of the wasps' nest I have got into.—Modeste is a demon; she saw my embarrassment, she mocks at it; she has just spoken to me of two lines of a letter of Madame de Chaulieu's that I was fool enough to trust her with. If she were to show them, I could never make it up again with Eléonore. So, pray, at once ask Modeste for that paper, and tell her from me that I have no views—no pretensions to her hand; I rely on her delicacy, on her honesty as a lady, to behave to me as though we had never met; I entreat her not to speak to me; I beseech her to vouchsafe to be implacable, though I dare not hope that her spite will move her to a sort of jealous wrath that would serve my ends to a miracle. . . . Go, I will wait here.'

On re-entering the room, Ernest de La Brière saw there a young officer of Havré's company of the Guards, the Vicomte de Sérizy, who had just arrived from Rosny to announce that MADAME was obliged to be present at the opening of the session. This constitutional solemnity was, as is well known, a very important function. Charles x. pronounced a speech in the presence of his whole family, the Dauphiness and MADAME being present in their seats. The choice of the envoy charged with expressing the Princess's regrets was a compliment to Diane. She was supposed to be the immediate object of this fascinating youth's adoration; he was the son of a Minister of State, gentleman-in-waiting, and hopeful of high destinies, as being an only son and heir to an immense fortune. The Duchesse de Maufrigneuse, however, only accepted the Viscount's attentions in order to throw light on the age of Madame de Sérizy, who, according to the chronicle repeated behind fans, had won from her the heart of handsome Lucien de Rubempré.

'You, I hope, will do us the pleasure of remaining at

Rosembray,' said the severe Duchess to the young man.

While keeping her ears open to evil-speaking, the pious lady shut her eyes to the peccadilloes of her guests, who were carefully paired by the Duke; for no one knows what such excellent women will tolerate on the plea of bringing a lost sheep back to the fold by treating it with indulgence.

'We reckoned without the Constitutional Government,' said the Duc d'Hérouville, and Rosembray loses a great honour, Madame la Duchesse——'

'We shall feel all the more at our ease,' observed a tall, lean old man of about seventy-five, dressed in blue cloth, and keeping on his hunting cap by leave of the ladies.

This personage, who was very like the Duc de Bourbon, was no less a man than the Prince de Cadignan, the Master of the Hounds, and one of the last of the French *Grands Seigneurs*.

Just as La Brière was about to slip behind the sofa to beg a minute's speech with Modeste, a man of about eight-and-thirty came in, short, fat, and common-looking.

'My son, the Prince de Loudon,' said the Duchesse de Verneuil to Modeste, who could not control an expression of amazement on her youthful features as she saw the man who now bore the name which the General of the Vendée Cavalry had made so famous by his daring and by his execution.

The present Duc de Verneuil was the third son taken by his father into exile, and the only survivor of four children.

'Gaspard,' said the Duchess, calling her son to her. The Prince obeyed his mother, who went on as she introduced Modeste—

'Mademoiselle de La Bastie, my dear.'

The heir presumptive, whose marriage to Desplein's

only daughter was a settled thing, bowed to the girl without seeming struck by her beauty, as his father had been. Modeste thus had an opportunity of comparing the young men of to-day with the old men of the past; for the old Prince de Cadignan had already made her two or three very pretty speeches, proving that he was not less devoted to women than to Royalty. The Duc de Rhétoré, Madame de Chaulieu's eldest son, noted for the style which combines impertinence with easy freedom, had, like the Prince de Loudon, greeted Modeste almost cavalierly.

The reason of this contrast between the sons and the fathers may, perhaps, lie in the fact that the heirs no longer feel themselves to be objects of importance, as their ancestors were, and excuse themselves from the duties of power, since they no longer have anything but its shadow. The fathers still have the fine manners inherent in their vanished grandeur, like mountains gilded by the sunshine, when all around them is in darkness.

At last Ernest succeeded in saying two words to Modeste, who rose.

'My little beauty!' said the Duchess, as she pulled a bell, thinking that Modeste was going to change her dress, 'you shall be taken to your rooms.'

Ernest went with Modeste to the foot of the great staircase to make the unhappy Melchior's request, and he tried to touch her by describing the poet's miseries.

'He loves her, you see! He is a captive who thought he could break his chain.'

'Love! In a man who calculates everything so closely?' retorted Modeste.

'Mademoiselle, you are at the beginning of your life; you do not know its narrow places. Every sort of inconsistency must be forgiven to a man who places himself under the dominion of a woman older than himself, for he is not responsible. Consider how many

sacrifices Canalis has offered to that divinity! how he has sown too much seed to scorn the harvest; the Duchess represents to him ten years of devotion and of happiness. You had made the poet forget everything, for, unhappily, he has more vanity than pride; he knew not what he was losing till he saw Madame de Chaulieu again. If you knew Canalis, you would help him. He is a mere child, and is spoiling his life for ever.—You say he calculates everything, but he calculates very badly, like all poets indeed — creatures of impulse, full of childishness, dazzled, like children, by all that shines, and running after it! He has been fond of horses, of pictures; he has yearned for glory; he sells his pictures to get armour and furniture of the style of the Renaissance and of Louis XV.; he now has a grudge against the Government. Admit that his whims are on a grand scale?'

'That will do,' said Modeste. 'Come,' she added, as she saw her father, and beckoned to him to ask him to accompany her, 'I will give you that scrap of paper; you can take it to the great man, and assure him of my entire consent to all he wishes, but on one condition. I beg you to give him my best thanks for the pleasure I have enjoyed in seeing him perform for my sole benefit one of the finest pieces of the German theatre. I know now that Goethe's *chef-d'œuvre* is neither *Faust* nor *Egmont*'—and, as Ernest looked at the sprightly girl with a puzzled expression—'it is *Torquato Tasso*,' she added. 'Desire Monsieur Canalis to read it once more,' she went on, smiling. 'I particularly desire that you will repeat this to your friend word for word, for it is not an epigram; it is the justification of his conduct—with this difference, that I hope he will become quite sane, thanks to his Éléonore's folly.'

The Duchess's head waiting-maid led Modeste and her father to their rooms, where Françoise Cochet had already arranged everything. Their choice elegance

surprised the Colonel, and Françoise told him that there were thirty guest-chambers in the same style in the Château.

'That is my idea of a country-house,' said Modeste.

'The Comte de La Bastie will have such another built for you,' replied the Colonel.

'Here, Monsieur,' said Modeste, handing the scrap of paper to Ernest, 'go and reassure our friend.'

The words 'our friend' struck the young man. He looked at Modeste to see if there were seriously some community of sentiment such as she seemed to acknowledge; and the girl, understanding the implied question, added—

'Well, go; your friend is waiting.'

La Brière coloured violently, and went, in a state of doubt, anxiety, and disturbance more terrible than despair. The approach to happiness is to true lovers very like what the poetry of Catholicism has called the Straits of Paradise, to express a dark, difficult, and narrow way, echoing with the last cries of supreme anguish.

An hour later the distinguished party had all met again in the drawing-room, some playing at whist, others chatting, the women busy with fancy-work, while awaiting the dinner-hour. The Master of the Hounds led Monsieur Mignon to talk of China, of his campaigns, of the great Provençal families of Portenduère, l'Estorade, and Maucombe; and he remonstrated with him on not asking for employment, assuring him that nothing would be easier than to obtain a post in the Guards with his full rank as Colonel.

'A man of your birth and fortune can never class himself with the present Opposition,' said the Prince with a smile.

This aristocratic society pleased Modeste; and not only that, during her visit she gained a perfection of manner which, but for this revelation, she would never

in her life have acquired. If you show a clock to a natural mechanic, it is always enough to reveal to him what mechanism means; the germs within him are at once developed. In the same way, Modeste intuitively assimilated everything that gave distinction to the Duchesses de Maufrigneuse and de Chaulieu. To her each detail was a lesson, where a commonplace woman would have fallen into absurdity by imitating mere manners. A girl of good birth, well informed, with the instincts of Modeste, fell naturally into the right key, and discerned the differences which divide the aristocratic from the middle class, and provincial life from that of the Faubourg Saint-Germain; she caught the almost imperceptible shades; in short, she recognised the grace of a really fine lady, and did not despair of acquiring it.

In the midst of this Olympus she saw that her father and La Brière were infinitely superior to Canalis. The great poet, abdicating his real and indisputable power, that of the intellect, was nothing but a Master of Appeals, eager to become a Minister, anxious for the collar of the Legion of Honour, and obliged to subserve every constellation. Ernest de La Brière, devoid of ambition, was simply himself; while Melchior, eating humble pie, to use a vulgar phrase, paid court to the Prince de Loudon, the Duc de Rhétoré, the Vicomte de Sérizy, the Duc de Maufrigneuse, as though he had no liberty of speech like Colonel Mignon, Comte de La Bastie, proud of his services and of the Emperor Napoleon's esteem. Modeste saw the continued pre-occupation of a wit seeking a point to raise a laugh, a brilliant remark to surprise, or a compliment to flatter the high and mighty personages, on whose level he aimed at keeping himself. In short, here the peacock shed his plumes.

In the course of the evening Modeste went to sit with the Master of the Horse in a recess of the drawing-room; she took him there to put an end to a struggle

she could no longer encourage without lowering herself in her own eyes.

'Monsieur le Duc,' she began, 'if you knew me well, you would know how deeply I am touched by your attentions. It is precisely the high esteem I have for your character, the friendship inspired by such a nature as yours, which makes me anxious not to inflict the smallest wound on your self-respect. Before you came to le Havre I loved sincerely, deeply, and for ever a man who is worthy to be loved, and from whom my affection is still a secret; but I may tell you, and in this I am more sincere than most girls, that if I had not been bound by this voluntary engagement, you would have been my choice, so many and so great are the good qualities I have found in you. A few words dropped by your sister and aunt compel me to say this. If you think it necessary, by to-morrow, before the hunt, my mother shall recall me home under the excuse of serious indisposition. I will not be present without your consent at an entertainment arranged by your kind care, where, if my secret should escape me, I might aggrieve you by an insult to your legitimate pretensions.

'"Why did I come?" you may ask. I might have declined. Be so generous as not to make a crime of an inevitable curiosity. This is not the most delicate part of what I have to communicate. You have firmer friends than you know of in my father and me; and as my fortune was the prime motor in your mind when you came to seek me, without wishing to treat it as a solace to the grief your gallantry requires of you, I may tell you that my father is giving his mind to the matter of the Hérouville lands. His friend Dumay thinks the scheme feasible, and has been feeling his way to the formation of a company. Gobenheim, Dumay, and my father are each ready with fifteen hundred thousand francs, and undertake to collect the remainder by the

confidence they will inspire in the minds of capitalists by taking substantial interest in the business.

'Though I may not have the honour of being the Duchesse d'Hérouville, I am almost certain of putting you in the position to choose her one day with perfect freedom in the exalted sphere to which she belongs.—Oh, let me finish,' said she, at a gesture of the Duke's.

'It is easy to see from my brother's agitation,' said Mademoiselle d'Hérouville to her niece, 'that you have gained a sister.'

'Monsieur le Duc, I decided on this on the day of our first ride together, when I heard you lamenting your position. This is what I wanted to tell you; on that day my fate was sealed. If you have not won a wife, you have, at any rate, found friends at Ingouville, if, indeed, you will accept us as friends.'

This little speech which Modeste had prepared was uttered with such soul-felt charm that tears rose to the Duke's eyes. He seized Modeste's hand and kissed it.

'Remain here for the hunt,' said he. 'My small merit has accustomed me to such refusals. But while I accept your friendship and the Colonel's, allow me to assure myself, by inquiring of the most competent experts, that the reclaiming of the marsh lands of Hérouville will involve the Company of which you speak in no risks, but may bring in some profits, before I accept the liberality of your friends.

'You are a noble girl, and though it breaks my heart to be no more than your friend, I shall glory in the title, and prove it to you whenever and wherever I find occasion.'

'At any rate, Monsieur le Duc, let us keep the secret to ourselves. My choice will not be announced, unless I am greatly mistaken, till my mother is completely cured; for it is my desire that my plighted husband and I should be blessed with her first glances.'

'Ladies,' said the Prince de Cadignan at the moment when all were going to bed, 'I remember that several of you proposed to follow the hunt with us to-morrow; now I think it my duty to inform you, that if you are bent on being Dianas, you must rise with the dawn. The meet is fixed for half-past eight. I have often in the course of my life seen women display greater courage than men, but only for a few minutes, and you will all need a certain modicum of determination to remain on horseback for a whole day excepting during the halt called for luncheon—a mere snack, as beseems sportsmen and sportswomen.—Are you still all resolved to prove yourselves gallant horsewomen?'

'I, Prince, cannot help myself,' said Modeste slily.

'I can answer for myself,' said the Duchesse de Chaulieu.

'I know my daughter Diane; she is worthy of her name,' replied the Prince. 'Well, then, you are all primed for the sport. However, for the sake of Madame and Mademoiselle de Verneuil, who remain at home, I shall do my best to turn the stag to the further end of the pool.'

'Do not be uneasy, ladies, the hunters' snack will be served under a splendid marquee,' said the Prince de Loudon when the Master of the Hounds had left the room.

Next morning at daybreak everything promised fine weather. The sky, lightly veiled with grey mist, showed through it here and there in patches of pure blue, and it would be entirely cleared before noon by a north-west breeze, which was already sweeping up some little fleecy clouds. As they left the Château, the Master of the Hounds, the Prince de Loudon, and the Duc de Rhétoré, who, having no ladies under their care, started first for the meet, saw the chimneys of the house piercing through the veil-mist in white masses against the russet foliage, which the trees in

Normandy never lose till quite the end of a fine autumn.

'The ladies are in luck,' said the Prince to the Duc de Rhétoré.

'Oh, in spite of their bravado last night, I fancy they will leave us to hunt without them,' replied the Duc de Verneuil.

'Yes, if they had not each a gentleman-in-waiting,' retorted the Duke.

At this moment these determined sportsmen—for the Prince de Loudon and the Duc de Rhétoré are of the race of Nimrod, and supposed to be the finest shots of the Faubourg Saint-Germain—heard the noise of an altercation, and rode forward at a gallop to the clearing appointed for the meet, at one of the openings into the Forest of Rosembray, and remarkable for a mossy knoll. This was the subject of the quarrel. The Prince de Loudon, bitten by Anglomania, had placed at the Duc de Verneuil's orders the whole of his stable and kennel, in the English style throughout. On one side of the clearing stood a young Englishman, short, fair, insolent-looking, and cool, speaking French after a fashion, and dressed with the neatness that characterises Englishmen even of the lowest class. John Barry had a tunic-coat of scarlet cloth belted round the waist, silver buttons with the arms of Verneuil, white doeskin breeches, top-boots, a striped waistcoat, and a black velvet collar and cap. In his right hand he held a hunting-crop, and in his left, hanging by a silk cord, was a brass horn. This chief huntsman had with him two large thoroughbred hounds, pure fox-hounds with white coats spotted with tan, high on their legs, with keen noses, small heads, and short ears, high up. This man, one of the most famous huntsmen of the county whence the Prince had sent for him at great expense, ruled over fifteen hunters and sixty English-bred dogs, which cost the Duc de Verneuil enormous sums; though he cared little for sport, he

indulged his son in this truly royal taste. The subordinates, men and horses, stood some little way off, and kept perfect silence.

Now on arriving on the ground, John found there three huntsmen with three packs of the King's hounds that had arrived before him in carts ; the Prince de Cadignan's three best men, whose figures, both in character and costume, were a perfect contrast with the representative of insolent Albion. These, the Prince's favourites, all wearing three-cornered cocked hats, very low and flat, beneath which grinned tanned, wrinkled, weather-beaten faces, lighted up as it were by their twinkling eyes, were curiously dry, lean, and sinewy men, burnt up with the passion for sport. Each was provided with a large bugle hung about with green worsted cords that left nothing visible but the bell of the trumpet ; they kept their dogs in order by the eye and voice. The noble brutes, all splashed with liver-colour and black, each with his individual expression, as distinct as Napoleon's soldiers, formed a *posse* of subjects more faithful than those whom the King was at that moment addressing—their eyes lighting up at the slightest sound with a spark that glittered like a diamond—this one from Poitou, short in the loins, broad-shouldered, low on the ground, long-eared, that one an English dog, white, slim in the belly, with short ears, and made for coursing : all the young hounds eager to give tongue, while their elders, seamed with scars, lay quiet, at full length, their heads resting on their fore-paws, and listening on the ground like wild men of the woods.

On seeing the English contingent, the dogs and the King's men looked at each other, asking without saying a word—

'Are we not to hunt by ourselves ? Is not this a slur on His Majesty's Royal Hunt ?'

After beginning with some banter, the squabble had grown warm between Monsieur Jacquin La Roulie, the

old Chief Huntsman of the French force, and John Barry the young Briton.

While still at some distance the princes guessed what had given rise to the quarrel, and the Master of the Hounds, putting spurs to his horse, ended the matter by asking in a commanding tone—

'Who beat the wood?'

'I, Monseigneur,' said the Englishman.

'Very good,' said the Prince de Cadignan, listening to John Barry's report.

Men and dogs, all alike, were respectful in the presence of the Master of the Hounds, as though all alike recognised his supreme authority. The Prince planned the order of the day; for a hunt is like a battle, and Charles x.'s Master of the Hounds was a Napoleon of the forest. Thanks to the admirable discipline carried out by his orders in stable and kennel, he could give his whole mind to strategy and the science of the chase. He assigned a place in the proceedings of the day to the Prince de Loudon's hounds and men, reserving them, like a cavalry corps, to turn the stag back on the pool, in the event of the King's packs succeeding, as he hoped, in forcing the game into the Royal demesne lying in the distance in front of the Château. He gratified the self-respect of his own old retainers by giving them the hardest work, and that of the Englishman, whom he employed in his own special line, by giving him an opportunity of displaying the strength of limb of his dogs and horses. Thus the two methods would work against each other, and do wonders to excite reciprocal emulation.

'Are we to wait any longer, Monseigneur?' asked La Roulie respectfully.

'I understand you, old friend,' replied the Prince. 'It is late, but——'

'Here come the ladies, for Jupiter scents the fetish odours,' said the second huntsman, observing the nose of his favourite hound.

'Fetish?' repeated the Prince de Loudon with a smile.

'He probably means fetid,' said the Duc de Rhétoré.

'That is it, no doubt, for everything that does not smell of the kennel is poisonous, according to Monsieur Laravine,' replied the Prince.

In point of fact, the three gentlemen could see in the distance a party of sixteen riders, and fluttering at their head the green veils of four ladies. Modeste with her father, the Duc d'Hérouville, and little La Brière, was in front, with the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse attended by the Vicomte de Sérizy. Then came the Duchesse de Chaulieu with Canalis at her side, she smiling at him with no sign of rancour. On reaching the clearing, where the huntsmen, dressed in red, holding their hunting horns, and surrounded by dogs and beaters, formed a group worthy of the brush of Van der Meulen, the Duchesse de Chaulieu, an admirable figure on horseback, though somewhat too stout, drew up close to Modeste, feeling it beneath her dignity to sulk with the young person to whom, the day before, she had not spoken a word.

Just at the moment when the Master of the Hounds had ended his compliments on such fabulous punctuality, Éléonore condescended to remark the splendid whip handle that sparkled in Modeste's little hand, and graciously begged to examine it.

'It is the finest thing in its way that I have ever seen,' said she, showing the gem to Diane de Maufrigneuse; 'but, indeed, it is in harmony with the owner's whole person,' she added, as she returned it to Modeste.

'You will confess, Madame,' replied Mademoiselle de La Bastie, with a mischievous but tender glance at La Brière, in which he could read an avowal, 'that it is a very strange gift as coming from a future husband——'

'Indeed,' exclaimed Madame de Maufrigneuse, 'I should regard it as a recognition of my rights, remembering Louis XIV.'

There were tears in La Brière's eyes ; he dropped his bridle, and was ready to fall ; but another look from Modeste recalled him to himself, by warning him not to betray his happiness.

The cavalcade set out.

The Duc d'Hérouville said in a low voice to La Brière : 'I hope, Monsieur, that you will make your wife happy, and if I can in any way serve you, command me ; for I should be delighted to contribute to the happiness of two such charming people.'

This great day, when such important interests of hearts and fortunes were definitely settled, to the Master of the Hounds offered no other problem but that as to whether the stag would cross the pool, and be killed on the grass slope within sight of the Château ; for huntsmen of such experience are like chess players, who can foresee a checkmate many moves ahead. The fortunate old gentleman succeeded to the height of his wishes ; the run was splendid, and the ladies relieved him of their presence on the next day but one, which proved to be rainy.

The Duc de Verneuil's guests remained three days at Rosembray. On the last morning the *Gazette de France* contained the announcement that M. le Baron de Canalis was appointed to the rank of Commander of the Legion of Honour and the post of Minister at Carlsruhe.

When, early in the month of December, the Comtesse de La Bastie was operated on by Desplein, and could at last see Ernest de La Brière, she pressed Modeste's hand, and said in her ear—

'I should have chosen him.'

Towards the end of February all the documents relating to the acquisition of the estates were signed by the worthy and excellent Latournelle, Monsieur Mignon's attorney in Provence. At this time the family of La Bastie obtained from His Majesty the distinguished

honour of his signature to the marriage contract, and the transmission of the title and the arms of La Bastie to Ernest de La Brière, who was authorised to call himself the Vicomte de la Bastie-La Brière. The estate of La Bastie, reconstituted to yield more than a hundred thousand francs a year, was entailed by letters patent registered by the Court in the month of April.

La Brière's witnesses were Canalis and the Minister, whose private secretary he had been for five years. Those who signed for the bride were the Duc d'Hérouville and Desplein, for whom the Mignons cherished enduring gratitude, after giving him magnificent proofs of it.

By and by, perhaps, in this long record of our manners, we may meet again with Monsieur and Madame de La Brière-La Bastie, and connoisseurs will then perceive how easy and sweet a tie is marriage when the wife is well informed and clever; for Modeste, who kept her promise of avoiding all the absurdities of pedantry, is still the pride and delight of her husband, of her family, and of her circle of friends.

PARIS, *March-July* 1844.

Printed by T. and A. CONSTABLE, Printers to Her Majesty
at the Edinburgh University Press